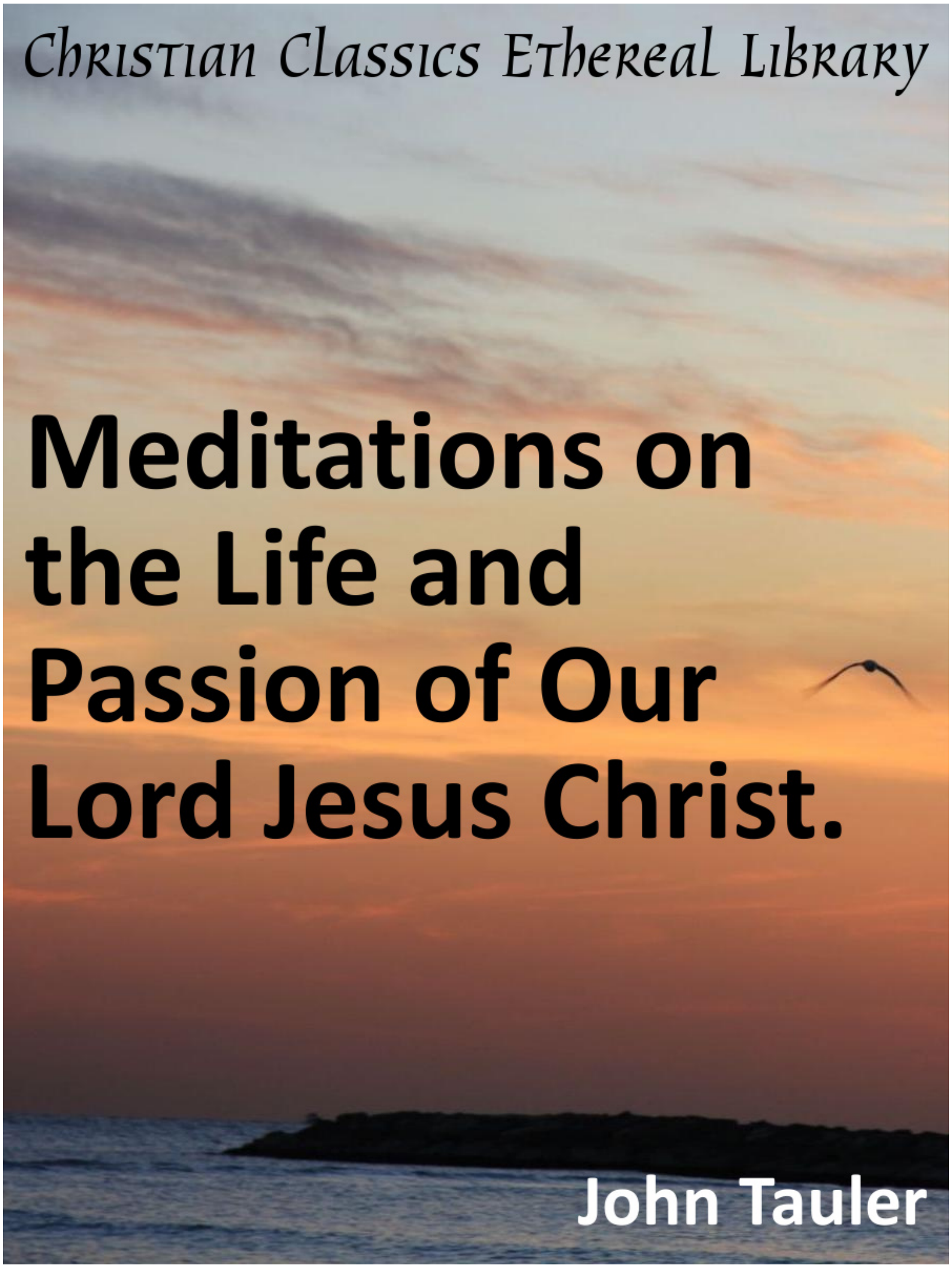

Christian Classics Ethereal Library
Meditations on the Life and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.
John Tauler

Meditations on the Life and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Author(s): Tauler, John (c. 1300-1361)

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Description: In his series of 45 meditations, John Tauler reflects upon the many stages of Jesus' ministry and passion. Tauler begins his mediations with a confession, in which he asks the Lord to open his heart and cleanse him from his unrighteousness so that he might be worthy to praise God's name. Throughout his meditations, Tauler shares the painful, yet redemptive, details of Christ's last days on Earth, from the washing of His disciple's feet to His final words on the cross. Tauler's meditations offer Christians a vivid illustration of Christ's sacrifice for us, encouraging us to draw near to Him. *Meditations of the Life and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ* is an excellent resource for Christians who are striving to emulate the compassionate qualities of Christ--humility, grace, and forgiveness.
Emmalon Davis
CCEL Staff Writer

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MEDITATIONS

ON THE

LIFE AND PASSION OF OUR

LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Mediæval Library of Mystical and Ascetical Works.

MEDITATIONS

ON THE

LIFE AND PASSION

OF OUR

LORD JESUS CHRIST.

BY DR. JOHN TAULER,

DOMINICAN FRIAR.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN

BY A SECULAR PRIEST,

AUTHOR OF A TRANSLATION OF

“The Book of the Visions and Instructions of B. Angela of Foligno;”
“The Life of V. Grignon de Montfort;” etc., etc.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, pray for us.

London:

THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON,

DUBLIN, AND DERBY.

1875.

CONTENTS.

Meditations

ON THE

Life and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Confession on bended knees to implore God's goodness.

O Most gracious Jesus, my Love, Salvation, and Comfort! O most faithful Lover of men, my Maker and Redeemer! Light of my heart, Solace of my spirit, and Medicine of my soul, how much do I owe Thee, O my God! Of what worth hast Thou esteemed me, O my Creator, Who hast formed me out of nothing to Thine own image and likeness? For a price beyond all reckoning hast Thou bought me; with exceeding great labour hast Thou redeemed me; for how many years in long-suffering hast Thou borne with me; while I still persevered in my iniquities hast Thou spared me. Many are the good gifts, and great is the loving-kindness, by which Thou hast drawn me, and followed after me; and countless are the times when in Thy mercy, and by Thy divine grace, Thou hast come to my help, although as many times 2
I turned my back upon Thee, nor obeyed Thy holy inspirations,—but neglected Thy most holy will;—nay, when I even gave myself up, instead, to my own corrupt and wicked will.

O most gracious God, how ungrateful have I been for all Thy bountiful gifts, even to this hour! O merciful God, behold I confess, to Thee my manifold and great iniquity. Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise; for, see, Lord, to Thee have I lifted up my soul. O unseen Sanctifier! do Thou purify my spirit, and make ready my heart to praise Thee, and give thanks unto Thee. Enlighten my understanding. Gather all my memory into one point. Kindle my desires. Purify my intention. Purge my affections. Raise up the powers of my soul to Thyself, and water its drought with the dew of Thy heavenly grace. O, most loving God! vouchsafe, now, I beseech Thee, to bow down Thine ears from Thy throne in heaven to me, Thy wretched and sinful creature, and hear my prayers, whereby in lowly fear I knock at the breast of Thy divine grace. Behold! I turn me wholly to Thee. Lo! I lift up all the powers of my soul to praise Thee, and bless Thee, and with my whole strength I open my heart unto Thee. Oh! cause this heart of mine, I beseech Thee, to be 3
pierced by the rays of Thy divine love, to be enlightened by the splendours of Thy divine brightness, so that inwardly I may look into the lowest depth of my soul, and may see and acknowledge how far I am from Thee, my God!—that I may behold, too, the faults and vices which keep me from Thy love and service, and make me unworthy to receive into my soul the inpouring of Thy divine grace. For so long a time, O Lord my God, hast Thou embraced and girt me round about with Thy immeasurable gifts, and benefits, and graces, but, above all, with Thine incomprehensible charity, that I cannot hide me from the glow of Thy love, or keep back my spirit from Thy praise. Yea! my heart desireth to praise Thee, and give thanks unto Thee, so far as I am able, with every power of my soul; and my spirit exulteth earnestly in Thy praise, and my soul doth magnify Thee, for over me Thy grace is exceeding great. But who am I, O most high and Almighty Maker, that I should dare to praise Thee? Moreover, how shall I dare to open my mouth, full, as it is, of all uncleanness, and covered

with the vile filth of so many vices, to tell of Thy power and might? Nay, what can I ever think, or understand, or speak of Thee, Who art immense, invisible, incomprehensible, inscrutable, so as to be able to praise, extol, and magnify Thee, since I am powerless to form any thought of Thee, or take in, or scrutinize Thy Being? Yet, although I, who am but a 4
poor, little, worthless man,—an empty straw,—am not sufficient of myself to praise Thee, O high, and terrible, and incomprehensible Majesty, since neither Thyself nor Thy works can I comprehend; nevertheless, for this very reason ought I to laud and extol Thee, O my God, and give thanks unto Thee; because Thou art so wonderful, and high, and incomprehensible and inscrutable, that neither by understanding, nor keenness of mind, nor reason, can any of Thy creatures reach unto Thee, save only in the way and in the measure that Thou givest them to understand concerning Thee by Thy grace.

For if, of old, profane and heathen men made such loud exultation, and boasted themselves so mightily of their great, and powerful, and immortal gods, in that they were made at great cost, and with cunning art, of gold, and other precious things,—and, indeed, in one sense they were not mortal, for never had they any share in mortal life—how much more just is it that I should exult in Thee, my Almighty Lord, Whose power is so exceeding great, that Thou fillest the heavens and the earth with the glory of Thy Majesty; Whose beauty is so exceeding fair, that the sun and the moon and all the elements marvel thereat, while the angelic spirits rejoice beyond all measure in contemplating Thee; Whose strength is so ex- 5
ceeding terrible, that by one look of Thine Thou makest the earth to tremble; Whose might is so exceeding marvellous, that by a word Thou didst bring forth the heavens and the earth, and all creatures are subject to Thy will; Whose riches are so exceeding vast, that whatsoever is contained within the boundary of heaven and earth belongeth to Thee alone, and is ruled by Thee without care or anxiousness; Whose goodness and loving kindness, last of all, are so exceeding tender, that Thy mercy is over all Thy works. For there is not even a little worm, however utterly vile, nor any creature, however abject, that doth not share Thy favour, or which Thou forgettest to uphold, and give it its food in due season.

If, then, from Thy marvellous works, O Almighty and most gracious God, we are able to discover and gather, that Thou art so powerful, and wise, and good, because Thou createst all things of such wonderful workmanship without any labour, and governest them so wisely without any care, and upholdest them so tenderly without any lessening of Thy riches;—how powerful, and wise, and good, and admirable, must Thou be in Thyself, since, of a surety, the workman is higher, and nobler, and worthier, than the work of his hands! For with the same ease couldst Thou create, rule, and uphold a thousand heavens and a thousand worlds, 6
as one heaven and one world. How then, O Almighty One, shall I tell of Thy praise, when this is above the understanding of all Thy creatures, even of the spirits in heaven? O most merciful God; I know that Thou standest in no need of any works or praise of ours, since in Thyself Thou ever aboundest in all praise. Simple art Thou in Thyself and perfect God,

Whom no creature can add to, or take from by any of its works, nevertheless Thou vouch-
safest to be praised by Thy frail and worthless creatures. Therefore, although my praise, O
loving God, is far too lukewarm and vile, and unworthy of Thy lofty power, and incompre-
hensible wisdom, and unutterable goodness; yet do Thou vouchsafe graciously to accept it,
and let Thy goodness make up for my weakness. O most tender Lord! although unworthy,
it is still my chief duty to praise Thee. For how can I be ungrateful for Thy manifold gifts
and benefits? Can I ever cease from praising Thee, when Thou ceasest not to do me good?
O most merciful Jesus, I would indeed wish to gather together, and heap up in the ark of
my heart, all Thy good gifts and all Thy loving-kindness which Thou hast poured out upon
me, and to laud Thee and give Thee special thanks for each one of Thy benefits. But who is 7
able, O Lord, to look into or sound the depth of Thy goodness, or to measure the breadth
of Thy love? Yet, although this is impossible for all Thy creatures, still may this, the chief
work of our salvation, wherein Thy mighty love is chiefly reflected, never depart from my
heart!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A devout Meditation and Thanksgiving on the Incarnation and Life of Jesus.

I Adore Thee, O Jesus Christ, Thou King of Israel, Light of the people, Lord of lords, Prince of peace, Power of God Almighty, Wisdom of the Father. I adore Thee, O Reconciler of men, most tender Advocate of sinners, the refreshment of them who labour, the comfort of them who are oppressed, the reward of all the just. I adore Thee, O Bread of Life, Medicine of the soul, Peace-maker of the people, Redeemer of the world, Joy of heaven, grateful Peace-offering and Sacrifice, peace-giving Victim, Who by the sweet smell of Thy vestments hast graciously bowed down and moved Thy Father, Who dwelleth on high, to look upon our 8
weakness and wretchedness, and to hear our groans and lamentations, and to take us back into His favour. O most merciful Jesus! behold, I confess Thy exceeding tenderness and grace, which out of Thine own essential goodness, and for no merits of ours, Thou hast poured out upon us; and I offer Thee the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for all Thy benefits, which Thou hast bestowed upon us, who are but an evil seed, vessels of wrath, reprobate children, useless servants, and sinners worthy of damnation and death. Behold! I praise, and exalt, and bless Thee, and give thanks unto Thee with my whole soul and heart, and all the powers and faculties of my mind. Of a truth, Thy mercy over us is exceeding great! For when we were all children of damnation and wrath, and enemies to Thee, spotted with the stain of original sin, destroyers of Thine image in our souls, violators of Thy temple; when, I say, the old serpent had infected us with his poison, then it was that Thou wert mindful of Thy mercy, and lookedst down from Thy dwelling-place in heaven upon this valley of tears, and didst have compassion on our tears, and didst hear our groans, touched in Thy bowels with sorrow of heart, and moved by pity for the wretchedness of Thy people;—yea, at the same time, Thy heart was kindled with love. And although Thou wert 9
the very Son of God, dwelling in light inaccessible, and upholding all things by Thy divine power, and governing and ruling all things by Thy divine wisdom, in Whose sight the angels tremble, at Whose name every knee is bent; yet in no way didst Thou disdain to bow down Thy lofty power to the dark prison-house of this wicked world, and to be made partaker of our weakness and misery, and to be clothed with the sackcloth of our mortality; and all this, that Thou mightest swallow up our wretchedness and weakness in Thine own divine power, and enrich our poverty, and cause our mortality to rise unto life eternal, and wash away and blot out our sins, and restore our nature to its first innocence, and lead us out of captivity into freedom of spirit, and make good again our ruin by bestowing on us glory everlasting. Nor to accomplish the work of our redemption didst Thou send any of Thine angels, no, not even from the Cherubim, or Seraphim, but Thou Thyself didst come at the bidding and

by the will of Thy Father,—of Whose unutterable goodness we have had experience in Thee, His Eternal Word,— not, indeed, for change of place, but that Thou mightest show us Thy Presence by taking upon Thee our humanity. From the bosom of the Father Thou camest down into the most pure, and virgin, and integral body of the chaste and sweet Virgin Mary; 10
in whose most sacred womb the power of the Holy Ghost alone caused Thee to be conceived and, born in the nature of man;—yet, in such, a way, that this birth of Thine in no way detracted from Thy Majesty, nor lessened the chaste integrity, of that most-blessed Virgin.

O wonderful and incomprehensible exchange! The Lord of glory, for our poor human weakness, gave His own most high Godhead! The Maker of all creatures did not abhor to take upon Him the form of a servant! Nor was it, alone, the form of a servant that He took upon Him, but He was even humbled, like an abject worm, and held of no account, and condemned as a transgressor, and a wicked man, to the shameful death of the cross,—He, Who is one day to judge the living and the dead! O most loving Jesus; how, from the very beginning, hast Thou loved us! It was not enough for Thee to be our Lord, and Maker, and Guardian, but Thou wouldst also become our Redeemer, fellow-worker, brother,—our own flesh and blood! Thou wouldst have a share in our weakness, and poverty, and mortality,—Thou who stoodest in no need of aught whatsoever! And, so poor wert Thou made, and so deeply didst Thou taste of the bitterness of our wretchedness, that at the very time 11
of Thy birth, Thou hadst not even any little thing belonging to Thee by inheritance, wherein Thy tender and infant limbs might have been laid and sheltered—Thou Who art the Lord of heaven and earth! In a stable wert Thou born, and the rough manger and coarse little cloths were all that Thou didst suffer to be a resting-place and a covering for Thy tender members! Nay, even Thy poor unworthy resting-place was borrowed by Thy blessed and truly-loving Mother of the beasts of the field that cannot reason. O good Jesus! whose heart would not be softened and kindled with love, and stirred up to devotion, and moved to compassion, when he beholdeth such exceeding poverty, and marvellous lowliness, and burning love towards man? O how quickly didst Thou begin to work at our salvation! How zealously didst Thou accomplish it! Not even one moment of time didst Thou lose, for not a moment was there which was not perfectly spent by Thee in saving us according to Thy Father's Will. Straightway, from the very first moment of Thy birth, Thou didst begin to give Thyself up to pain and suffering.

But why, O sweet Jesus, was it Thy Will to become so lowly, and poor, and helpless, and abject, except to teach us lowliness, and to commend to us holy poverty? Thou didst take 12
our human nature, that we might be made partakers of Thy Godhead. Thou wert made the Son of Man, that we might be made the sons of God, that we might become, I say, by adoption and grace, what Thou wert from all eternity by nature. Thou wert born in a stable, that Thou mightest preserve not men only, but beasts, (for men had become beasts.) Thou wert placed in a manger, and Thyself wert made grass, that Thou mightest become the food of poor

beasts. Yes, O Lord, it must needs have been, that Thou shouldst be made grass, when men themselves had become beasts. For a certain prophet saith: “The beasts have become rotten in their own dung,” that is, in the filth of their sins. In order, then, that these animal men might feed, the Word was made grass, (that is, flesh.) For all flesh is grass; and that they might be led out of the stable of their filthy sins, Christ was born in a stable. Now, then, O man given up to thy senses, adore Him lying in a stable, Whom thou hast despised as the Ruler of heaven; adore as a beast, and as one of the cattle of the field, Him Whom, in thy character as man, thou wouldst not recognize. Turn now to Him, in the wretchedness and banishment of this world, from Whom thou didst turn away in the paradise of delights. 13 Honour now His manger, Whose commandment thou hast broken. Feed, now, upon the grass, who hast turned aside from, and left the Bread of angels. O Almighty King of glory, what love hath overcome Thee, that Thou shouldst make Thyself so poor, so lowly, so abject, for me, who am but a sinner and a poor worm; that Thou shouldst be placed in a filthy stable among brute beasts, Who art adored by the angels in heaven; that Thou shouldst be nourished with milk, Who art Thyself the Bread of angels, that Thou shouldst be wrapped in coarse swaddling clothes, Who adornest the heaven with stars, and clothest Thy holy ones in stoles of gold?

Nay, even in Thy very harmless infancy Thine enemies kept not back their cruel hands from Thy tender members. Scarcely wert Thou born, and while as yet Thou layest in the chaste arms of Thy sweet Mother, taking pleasant rest on her maternal bosom, as in Thy hunger she gave to Thee her virgin milk; when not as yet hadst Thou spoken a word to anyone, even then did cruel and wicked men seek after Thy life to destroy it. O sweet Jesus, how quickly did they rise up against Thee, those wicked enemies of Thine! How young didst Thou begin to suffer! As Thou grewest in age, so, too, grew Thy suffering. Eight days had barely passed away, when Thou didst shed Thine infant and innocent Blood for me, and as 14 if under sin and the law, wert circumcised according to the law, that Thou mightest uphold, and build up, and sanctify the law. So, too, that Thine infancy and boyhood might be an ensample of religion and the mirror of virtues, Thou didst not follow the vain ways of this world. Thou soughtest no comfort or relaxation of mind in boyish games, or in the company and meeting-places of talkative men, where nothing but temporal and vain things are spoken of. But in the temple, and worship? and service of Thy Father, wert Thou found amidst the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions,—Thou Who art the very Wisdom of the Father, the Lord of knowledge, the Eternal Truth, and the Word of God, which was in the beginning. And that Thou mightest deliver unto us a certain form of obedience, Thou placedst Thyself under Thy parents, being made subject unto them, Thou to Whom all the elements are subject, to Whom all power is given in heaven and in earth, and Who hast the keys of death and hell.

Then, when the fulness of age had come to Thee, and the time was at hand when Thou wert to put out Thy hand to strong things, Thou didst go forth in the morning for the salva- 15
tion of Thy people, and didst rejoice as a strong giant to run the course of our poverty. And that, first of all, Thou mightest teach us the virtue of blessed humility, which is the beginning and ground-work of all virtues, Thou wentest forth, an innocent lamb, to Thy servant John the Baptist, who was administering the baptism of penance unto sinners, just as if Thou Thyself wert a sinner; and Thou didst ask of him to be baptized, Thou Who hadst never felt the least stain of sin—not that Thou hadst need to be sprinkled, and washed with water, but that Thou, in Thine own Person, mightest bless the water as with sacred chrism, and mightest consecrate baptism for us, whereby we were to be cleansed from all stain of sin, and that thus Thou mightest point out, that Thou wert the true Messias, promised to the fathers, and the Christ, that is, the anointed One, and the spotless Lamb of God, Who, takest away the sins of the world.

Thence Thou wentest forth in the power of the spirit into the wilderness, and that, as our strong standard-bearer and leader, Thou mightest give us courage for the fight, Thou Thyself, first of all, didst enter into battle, and begin a single-handed combat with our cruel enemy, whom straightway, with his whole power, at the first meeting Thou didst lay low, that being conquered by a man, he might be confounded, and cease henceforth to boast that of old he had conquered and deceived man. O unvanquished Lion, how earnestly, and with 16
what toil hast Thou wrought out our salvation, in order to stir us up, Thy weak members, and give us courage for toil and for battle. Thou didst not fear the loneliness of the wilderness, nor grow pale at the temptation of the devil—no gnawing of hunger, no roughness of penance held Thee back, nor wert Thou ever weary of the labour of prayer, or of meditation, or of watching. For the salvation of us, Thy suffering members, was ever in Thy Heart, and for these, like a most faithful father, Thou wert ever careful, and didst earnestly labour to enrich them with eternal goods, and lay up for us the unfailing treasure of virtue and merit, from which we might draw in all abundance whatever might be wanting to us. Then, too, because the light of Thy Godhead, which lay hidden within Thee, under the bushel of Thy Manhood, could not be concealed, Thou didst suffer the light of Thy heavenly doctrine and wisdom to shine out in the face of day, that Thou mightest enlighten all men as to the faith. For to all who dwelt in those parts Thou didst announce the kingdom of God, confirming Thy words by marvellous works and miracles; while to all who were weak, or in evil state, Thou didst declare Thy divine power, nor to anyone didst Thou refuse Thy tender loving-kindness, 17
that Thou mightest gain all, and heal them. But the understanding of men was darkened, for not with love did they receive Thee as their Saviour, but rather turned away their hearts far from Thee, as if from some seducer and impostor of evil will. At the same time, they despised Thy teaching; they spoke ill of Thy works; they made light of Thy miracles. Not only were they ungrateful for all these Thy benefits, but even for the very reasons for which

they ought to have loved and worshipped Thee, for these same reasons they wickedly accused, and hated, and persecuted, and blasphemed Thee, saying: “This man is not from God: He seduceth the multitude: He is a winebibber and a friend of publicans.” Yet all the while, O most meek Lamb, Thou openedst not Thy sacred mouth to utter words that might have grieved them, but Thou didst bear all with gentleness. Why, then, art thou so impatient, and so fainthearted, O my soul, when any adversity cometh upon thee, or some pain or annoyance is inflicted on thee on the part of men? Dost thou not perceive how great was the wrong, and the slight, and the contempt, and the shame which the Lord of glory suffered for thee? Dost thou make more account of thyself than of Him? If they called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of His household, and His ministers? 18

O Jesus, Wisdom of God, Eternal Truth, how brightly hath Thy divine light shone down on the sons of Adam! How hath all Thy life, and every action of Thine, been to us, as it were, a light leading us on to the truth! How clearly hath the light of Thy heavenly teaching lit up the darkness! How full were all Thy works of lowliness; and long-suffering, and love, and self-denial; in a word, of every grace and virtue, so that in these were reflected the most perfect examples of all holiness! Therefore, whatever is wanting to me, from these sources will I draw it. If in anything I shall happen to doubt, in Thy holy life as in a clear mirror will I look. For here I find rigorous self-denial, true obedience, profound humility, voluntary poverty, unutterable purity, marvellous patience, unchanging long-suffering, constant perseverance, and incomprehensible charity. Here, also, I find in all abundance, that of which we chiefly stand in need, infinite loving-kindness and mercy,—yea, and all the virtues that I can possibly think of in my heart, all these I clearly discover written down as on a tablet. Of a truth, Thou art that book which the prophet saw written within and without, for all Thy life, both outward and inward, is full of spiritual teaching, and all virtue. Truly, whosoever, with the prophet eateth this book, and masticateth it well, shall find it sweet in his 19
mouth, like honey. O most pitiful Jesus, what labours didst Thou undergo, in seeking after and gathering together the lost sheep of the house of Israel! With what friendship and sweetness didst Thou recall them from their error to Thyself; how gently didst Thou smile upon them, and win them by Thy good deeds, and draw them by Thy love to Thy Father, now by the promise of heavenly gifts, now by the threats of the torments of hell, at one time by smiles, at another by upbraiding. What more couldst Thou have done unto this vine, that Thou hast not done? Oh! how earnestly didst Thou endeavour to plant Thy Father’s vineyard, without ever sparing Thyself in heat or cold, or in thirst or hunger, or in watchings or labours? For Thy Heart was ever glowing within Thee with an exceeding burning longing, as in a fiery furnace, to gain for Thy Father, and save the whole of Israel.

What shall I pay unto Thee, O sweet Jesus, for all these immense benefits of Thine? What is man, that Thou shouldst so thirst after his salvation, and suffer so much for his redemption, and labour so earnestly to draw him to Thy love? What is there in lost man in 20

which Thou canst take delight? Of what use to Thee is the sinner in his uncleanness? Or what gain dost Thou look for from a vile and wretched worm of earth, that Thou placest Thy Heart so near him? O gentlest Lover of men, why have I begun so late to love Thee? Why have I left Thee, the well-spring of virtue, and the vein of living waters? Why have I turned away from Thee, Who art the stream of spiritual favours, the abyss of graces, the highest good, and the mirror of all perfection? What madness hath overcome me, that I should not blush to offend so faithful a father, to anger so powerful a Lord? Alas! wretched man that I am, I have forsaken Thee, the Bread of angels, and in my exceeding want have filled myself with the husks of vicious pleasure, in order that I might satisfy my beastly appetites. O, Restorer of nature, how glorious and beautiful didst Thou create me, and how full of corruption and foul have I made myself! For behold, my heart is turned aside, it is hard like adamant. My memory is scattered abroad, my understanding is darkened, my will is corrupted, my love is cold, my soul hath become a filthy thing, my spirit is relaxed and languisheth. I am wholly given up to my senses, I have become hateful and abominable. When Thou leavest me, I grieve not; I have fallen into the devils' snare, and I see it not; they have struck me, and wounded me to death, and I feel it not; I have fallen to the gates of hell, 21
and I mourn not. Yet not even in this state, O most merciful God, dost Thou turn away from me Thy great and manifold mercy. Thou callest me to Thyself, who have gone far from Thee. Thou drawest me to Thee, who still refuse to come. Thou openest Thine arms to receive me, before I reach Thee. Thou bowest down Thy Head to give me the kiss of peace, who am still all unworthy and unclean. Thou preventest me, and meetest me with Thy grace, before I am reconciled to Thee. Thou pourest out Thy grace upon me, more quickly than I dare to ask it. Lastly, Thou feedest me with the most sweet bread of Thy chosen children, who am not worthy to be the last of Thy slaves. What more shall I ask of Thee? For all these things my soul doth magnify Thee, and my spirit doth rejoice in Thee, O God, my Saviour. All my inward parts praise, and bless, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord, for Thy mercy over me is great. Oh! if Thou showest Thyself so loving to Thine enemies, my tender Jesus, what then art Thou to the friends of Thy Heart?

Moved, then, by the contemplation of this Thy immense mercy and goodness, I, a wretched and vile sinner, weighed down with the heavy burden of my numberless sins, 22
come to Thee, O good Jesus! Very humbly do I cast myself at Thy feet, for Thou art full of grace, and exceedingly kind towards sinners, and it is, indeed, Thine own natural property ever to have mercy, and to spare, nay, even to show favour and kindness. Grant, I beseech Thee, that I may find the same grace which blessed Magdalen, Thy most fervent lover, obtained from Thee. Say unto my soul that word full of comfort which Thou spakest unto her: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." For although my sins are beyond measure great, yet are they small when compared with Thy mercy. O, sweet Jesus, help me, for indeed Thou canst; give me the desire of my heart, for in my deep lowliness and wretchedness I cry unto Thee!

Forgive me much, that I may love Thee much, and may magnify and bless Thee. Heal me wholly, that I may wholly cleave unto Thee. Unburden me of my heavy load of sins, that I may freely and cheerfully follow Thee. Cast away all my sins into the abyss of Thy divine mercy, and then so grind them into dust, and bring them to nothing, that all remembrance of them may pass away from before Thee. For now I have determined with myself, from this time forward, never more to offend Thee, O my God. Most tender Jesus, since I confess 23
to Thee my wretchedness, show unto me, I beseech Thee, Thy goodness. All my wretchedness and poverty have I shown unto Thee, do Thou then open unto me the ample treasures of Thy grace, and at the same time apply to my sins and negligences all Thy toil, and labours, and all Thy good works, and all the merits of Thy most sacred Passion. Reconcile unto me Thy Father who is in heaven, and with whom Thou livest and reignest, Co-eternal God, world without end. Amen.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Of the washing of the disciples' feet.

When the time of grace and mercy was at hand, in which He had decreed from everlasting to accomplish our salvation, and to redeem us, not with corruptible gold and silver, but with His own precious Blood, out of true love, Christ Jesus, as a most bountiful Master of the household, desired to eat supper with His disciples before He departed from them by a cruel death, and as a sign of the mighty love with which He loved them. And in this supper it was His will to establish His testament, declaring openly, that even to the end He had loved them as His true children, and had pressed them to His fatherly heart from everlasting. 24
For, when the supper was over, and He had pointed out to His disciples that His death and Passion was very near at hand, and had beheld how grievously they were afflicted thereat, at the thought, namely, that they were to be torn asunder from so faithful a Father and loving a Teacher—out of His exceeding great compassion He gently comforted them, and said: "My little children, be not sad, nor let your heart be troubled, I will not leave you orphans. It is expedient for you that I go away. I shall go away, therefore, but I will come again to you." But when He saw that they had lost all heart, and were sore stricken, some of them, indeed, with tears running down their cheeks, and others heaving deep sighs from their inmost heart, and others, again, showing by their pale and changing countenances the anguish of their spirit, all the bowels of His compassion were moved, for He is full of mercy, and, at the same time, He spake unto them words of comfort, and said: "My little children, fear not, neither be ye troubled. Lo, I am with you, even unto the end of the world." See, with what burning love He embraced them. Again, when the Paschal Lamb was made ready in the place where He had eaten, He entered the upper-chamber, and His disciples followed Him. 25

Come, then, and let us also follow Him, for our tender-hearted Lord will not suffer anyone to go out of that chamber hungering. When, therefore, the Paschal Lamb had been eaten, according to the rites and law of the Jews, He summed up, as it were, in one, but, at the same time, a twofold virtue, all the virtues which He had practised His whole life long in divers and marvellous ways, that they who cannot follow the works and virtues of Christ, may, with all earnestness, endeavour to acquire, at least, these two, which He taught us so carefully at the end of His life. For, indeed, without these virtues no man can obtain salvation, or the bliss of heaven. He rose, therefore, from the table, and, girt about with a linen cloth, began very diligently to wash His disciples' feet. Now, the reason why He performed this grand work of striking humility at the end of His life was this:—namely, that He might deeply impress upon His dear disciples, and upon all of us, the virtue of profound humility. For, without this, we cannot persevere in the other virtues, nor make progress, nor please God, nor obtain His grace, since, according to the Scripture, God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble. And as pride is the beginning and source of all evil, so humility 26

is the groundwork of all virtues. This blessed virtue uniteth us with God: and by humility we, as it were, force God to sink down into our souls. For no man can use force over the exceeding mighty power of God, save by deep self-contempt, and utter self-deprivation. And as water ever seeketh the lower places, so doth God, by His grace, flow down with greater readiness into a lowly heart. By humility the Blessed Virgin, our Lady, overcame Him Who is unconquerable, reconciled Him Who had been offended, gave pleasure to the King most High, and drew Him down to rest in her pure body, as she herself confesseth: "For He hath regarded the lowliness of His hand-maiden." By pride we have been cast out of Paradise, by humility we are raised again to glory. But if pride was so damnable in the angels, that justice required that they should be driven out of the everlasting heaven, although, by reason of their great glory and brightness, they had many more reasons for exalting themselves than man; how doth the latter dare to lift himself up, as if he himself were somewhat, when, of a truth, both his substance, and state, and nature, and dwelling-place, and all belonging to him, drag him down, and render him vile? For, if he will only observe what he hath been, what he is, what he undergoeth, where he dwelleth, and what he will be, 27
he will, of a surety, perceive how his one condition lowereth and humbleth him, and casteth reproach upon the depth of his lowness in these words: "Why art thou proud, O dust and ashes?"

But, although our Lord Jesus taught us this virtue His whole life long, both by word and deed, yet, when He was now nigh unto death, He desired more deeply to impress it both upon His disciples and all of us, and more expressly to teach it us by His own lowly actions, so that it might never be blotted out of our hearts. And, of a truth, could our sweet Lord have shown us deeper humility than by washing His own creatures' feet? He bowed Himself down to the earth, and was made the servant of all His disciples. Who, I ask, without compunction and devotion, can behold the King of glory, at Whose marvellous power the angelic spirits are lost in wonder and trembling adoration,—girt round the loins with a linen cloth, and washing so carefully the dust-covered feet of His own servants? His disciples sat, and He, the Power of God Almighty, threw Himself down upon the ground. He, the Lord of lords, knelt down at the feet of His own disciples, although at His Name every knee is bent. Oh! how humbly, how devoutly, how lovingly He passed from one to the other, and, placing His sacred knees upon the ground, touched the dirt of their feet with those fair, clean hands 28
of His,—nay, so carefully washed them, and dried them, and kissed them. Nor was it only the feet of His friends, but even of him who betrayed Him, that He desired to wash and kiss, since He knew that he had been sold by the latter for thirty pieces of silver; yet, not less kindness did He show to him than to the others, this truly tender-hearted Jesus. Now this great work of humility He wrought for our instruction. Hear Him speaking Himself to His disciples: "Know ye what I have done to you. If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, so ought you also to wash one another's feet. For, behold, I have given you an example,

that as I have done, so you should do also, that you, in like manner, may perform one to the other the works of mutual love, and mutually help one another, and this, too, not only to your friends, but to your enemies.” Wherefore, whosoever refuseth to follow the profound humility of the Son of God on earth, will never be exalted with Him at the right hand of His Father in heaven. For, nothing doth God love so much, as a pure, and lowly, and peaceful heart, as He saith Himself: “On whom shall My Spirit rest, save on him who is of a lowly and peaceful heart, and who trembleth at My words?” 29

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Of the Institution of the Worshipful and most August Sacrament.

When, therefore, our Lord Jesus had instructed His disciples in true humility, both by word and example, and the time of His Passion was close at hand, He desired to teach both them and all of us another of His virtues, not less necessary for our salvation than the one already spoken of; that is to say, perfect love. These two virtues He left us as His testament for an everlasting remembrance, desiring to impress them on our inmost hearts, for in them lies our whole salvation, and without them we cannot be saved. Nay, even had we nothing else, these alone would suffice. Hear, now, what our most gracious Lord said to His disciples: "My little children, a new commandment I give unto you;" as if He would say: "Many lessons, and divers and numerous commandments have you from Me. But now, a new commandment I give unto you, the highest, indeed, of all commandments, and the compendium of all My teachings; and this is, that you love one another as I have loved you; that as I lay down My 30
life for you, so also you should love one another unto death, and help one another; that, as I have loved him who betrayed Me, and have prayed for them who have brought Me to the cross, so also you should love your enemies, and do good to them, by lending loving help to all who persecute you, and bring evil upon you." This new commandment of love our Lord Jesus taught, not only by word, but also by deed. And when He desired to make known to us that we were His true sons, and that out of His eternal love He bore us in His bosom, and that from everlasting we had been in Him, and, as it were, in our origin, had rested in Him from all eternity; and that no earthly father had ever embraced us with such exceeding love as that with which He had embraced us. Then it was that, as a most faithful father, He left us His most august testament, and bequeathed to us that excellent good, which is nobler and better than heaven and earth, even His own most sacred Body for food, and for our drink His most precious Blood. O wonderful mystery! O most high Sacrament! Oh, all ye, as many as love God, come, make ready, behold, wonder, marvel, praise, announce and magnify the Name of the Lord. For so great, so marvellous a work hath our Lord wrought 31
in us, that whosoever desireth to look into it with his inward understanding, can only shrivel up in spirit, and faint away in mind, and lose all power for exceeding great astonishment. And even if a man desire, according to the poor little measure of his human frailty, and by the help of God's grace, to look through and search the depth of this love by means of his reason and understanding, as far, namely, as God vouchsafeth out of love to allow him to do this, yet will his heart melt away, and burn, and glow with the flame and fire of love. For, although it was a great and wonderful work that God Almighty vouchsafed to take upon Himself the nature of man, and to clothe Himself with the sackcloth of our mortality, yet doth this work leave all His other works far behind. For, in the former work, He took upon Himself, indeed, our manhood, but in this work, joined and united with His

Manhood, He poureth out upon us His own Godhead, so that we receive It within ourselves. In the former He took on Him our manhood, in the latter, we are clothed with His Godhead.

For, as the food taken by man passeth into his substance, and becometh of one nature with man, so whosoever worthily receiveth this Food, is made one thing with our Lord by grace. And as our Lord saith by Augustine, we change not this divine Food into our substance, 32
but rather are transmuted and transformed by it into Himself, and thus are made deiform, and of one nature with Him. Now this is the way by which we put on Christ, as the apostle admonisheth. Oh! who can ever reach, by any act of the understanding, unto this infinite abyss of deepest love, which God hath willed to make known to us in this sublime and wonderful Sacrament? And this, indeed, He did at the end of His life, that it might be, as it were, the sum, and compendium, and everlasting remembrance of all His works. Moreover, although it was at the last supper that He first instituted this Sacrament, and gave It to man to take, yet It included within Itself the whole Christ, God Incarnate. For in this Sacrament He had His true Body, and His living soul, and He was Very God; and these three we receive in this Sacrament. Where, now, is the heart that will not glow with burning love, and be stirred and moved to devotion, when it considereth with what exceeding love He, the King of glory, the Lord of majesty, was consumed for us vile creatures, who are but dust and ashes, in whom, besides, He found nothing but frailty, and sin, and want? Yet of such He can say: "My delights are to be with the children of men." Can He lift us higher than by setting up His own temple within us? Can He love us more than by vouchsafing to become 33
the food of His own creatures? He is the highest and most perfect Good, with which no other good can be compared, and which can never fail; and because His fatherly and loving Heart could think of nothing better, nothing higher, He gave us Himself, so as to prove to us His bountiful goodness, and the deep love of His Heart. Bountiful altogether is the bestowal, when He giveth Himself, but how much more bountiful when He giveth Himself in this way! For He gave Himself to be out father, and brother, and companion, and food, and ransom, and mediator, and advocate. Lastly, He will give us Himself for our everlasting reward, and will so satiate us in Himself, that He will be to us all that we can desire.

Nor is this all, for over and above all this bountiful goodness, He is ever ready to come into our hearts, and to bestow upon us all the merits of His Incarnation, and Life and Passion. He saith by His prophet: "Thou shalt call and the Lord will hear thee. Thou shalt cry aloud, and He shall say, 'Lo, here I am.'" And He Himself saith: "If any man love Me, My Father will love him, and We will come and make our dwelling with him." Look, O my soul! to thy dignity, and rejoice exceedingly in thy God, Who hath lifted thee up from the dung-hill of 34
thy sins, that thou mayest be the dwelling-place of the Adorable Trinity, thou who wert formerly the devil's slave.

Nor was it enough for this most ardent Lover to show us such exceeding love. More deeply still must He lower and submit Himself unto us. He will not wait until He be invited

and desired by us: He cometh Himself first, and knocketh, and prayeth us to let Him in. Hear what He saith in the Apocalypse: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man open unto Me, I will enter in, and sup with him, and he with Me.” O blessed and happy soul, that listeneth to his Lord’s knock, that watcheth, and with longing waiteth for His coming, so as not only straightway to open to her Lord and Bridegroom, but even with her lamp burning, and full of oil, to go out to meet Him, and to take Him back with her, saying: “Let my Beloved come into His garden!”

Oh! how great the happiness to receive Him, as He cometh back from the heavenly marriage-feast, drunk with wine, full of grace and truth, coming forth from His Father’s most pleasant Bosom, all delightful and full of comfort, flowing with spiritual delights, ready to give His loving bride the kiss of peace which He Himself had received from His Father. Oh! what a happiness to eat with Him, Who thus giveth Himself for food! Who, I ask, could ever have so cast himself down, or so raised us up? Heaven and earth are filled with the glory 35
of His divine Majesty, and yet He refuseth not to be handled, and taken and eaten by us worthless worms of earth. The heaven of heavens is not large enough to contain His greatness, and He telleth us that it is His delight to be with us, who lie hidden in the filthy homes of earth.

Oh! whose is the spirit that will not marvel with exceeding wonder? Whose is the heart that will not melt away at the burning fire of this unutterable love? How could He have given us surer proof of this His burning love for us? It is a small thing to Him to send His holy angels to honour and visit us, but that He, the King of angels, should come to His own servants, that He should visit the sick, and comfort the weak, and lift up the fallen, and console the desolate, and give heart to them who despair, and instruct them who doubt, and call back them that wander, and refresh them that hunger, and give warmth to them that are lukewarm; in a word, that He should heal all our languor, and all our sins, and this not by any strange medicine, but by His own precious Body and Blood! O wonderful mystery, O most high Sacrament, O unutterable love, O unheard of bounty, in which the Giver is Himself the Gift, the servant eateth his Lord, the creature receiveth his Maker, the minister 36
is commanded to sit at the table of the most high King, and is filled to overflowing with divine food; in which man is fed with the Bread of angels, the Father distributeth the Body of His only Begotten, and giveth His friends to drink, in all abundance, of the precious Blood of His dear Son! Who hath ever heard of greater or more lavish bounty? Where is the understanding that can look into and grasp the mysteries of this wonderful Sacrament? What more could God have done for us? How could He have more closely joined to us His most high Godhead, than to become our food, and to incorporate us wholly into Himself? For as bodily food, when taken by man, falleth down softly into his inward parts, and nourisheth all his members, and at length passeth into his substance, so, in like manner, Christ letteth Himself sink down into our souls, in order to fill us wholly with Himself, and He draweth

all our powers into Himself. And if He meeteth our souls thus worthily made ready, so as to enable Him freely to accomplish within us His own pleasant work, then, too, according to the Scriptures, He buildeth up and destroyeth, He killeth and giveth life, He teareth up and planteth, He darkeneth and giveth light. For He is that Lamb Whom St. John saw sitting on the throne of heaven, and making all things new. 37 Even as He once made our souls, when before they had no being, to His own image and likeness, so also He reneweth and marvellously reformeth them according to the same likeness, which in us hath become defiled and broken. Thus, too, thou mayest hear Him say by the mouth of one of His prophets: “I Myself will feed My sheep, and I will make them to lie down. That which hath perished I will seek; that which hath been cast away I will bring back; that which is broken I will bind together; that which is weak I will strengthen.”

Oh! who can grasp in mind, or who is able to discover in thought, all the marvels, and all the happiness, which this divine Food worketh in the soul that worthily receiveth It? Oh! how pure, how holy, and, above all, how divine doth such a man straightway become by means of this Food? For if the nature of the elements is such as, after the manner of their author, to consume all things, and make them like themselves, and transmute them into their own substance, how much more will this most noble Food, which is God Himself, consume whatever in man is vicious, or carnal, or sensual, and cause to spring up and encourage all virtue and all good; and, chief of all, will at last transform the whole man into Itself, and unite him with Itself, and, so far as is possible for a creature, make him of one 38 essence with God, and like to Him. While this is being done, that is to say, while man is being conformed and made like unto this Food, he also becometh wholly quickened in spirit, for he receiveth the Bread of Life, so that now he may say with the apostle: “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” He is made, in like manner, wholly angelic and heavenly, for he hath eaten of the Bread of angels, and of their food. Lastly, he is made all divine, inasmuch as he hath received God Himself, Who hath so filled him, and, so to speak, deified his powers, that he can no longer seek, or desire, or meditate upon, or love anything, save only God, while to do God’s will, and whatever God’s love requireth, is for him enough. What, then, can be wanting to us, when we have partaken of this most noble Food? O merciful God! what more couldst Thou have done for us, or what hast Thou done? Even hadst Thou brooded with all Thy power and all Thy wisdom upon this one thing, namely, how to bestow upon man some great gift, and to show to him some striking proof of Thy exceeding love, yet so far as my understanding can grasp, no nobler, or higher, or more useful, or more saving gift couldst Thou have lavished upon us. For Thou hast poured out upon us the whole treasure of Thy grace. 39 Thou hast opened to us Thy fatherly Heart, and allowed the veins of Thy exceeding love to flow in all abundance over us. Openly hast Thou made known to us with what great love for us Thou burnest and art wounded. And because Thou couldst no longer hide this blessed wound, and burning fire, the flame broke forth, and Thou sufferedst

man to feel the force of Thy love, giving to him Thy most sacred Body for food, and Thy precious Blood for drink, that so man, looking upon the immensity of this love, might, in his turn, be inflamed and wounded by love, and, at the same time, by its sublimity, might be inwardly forced and admonished to repay it in some way, and satisfy its longings.

See here, how marvellous and unheard of hath been the meeting and the union of the Divine Wisdom with our nature. It took from us our weakness, and our mortal manhood, and bestowed upon us Its own adorable Godhead. And the better to do this, It could find no more suitable or pleasant way, than to leave Itself to us under the appearance of food and drink. O power of God, to be ever praised, that under the appearance of a little bread could give His own high Godhead, could give His own perfect Body and holy Soul unto all men, equally and wholly to be their food, which, while wholly received by every man, yet
remaineth in Itself whole and incorrupt! O marvellous wisdom of God, that instituted this 40
subtle and saving means of salvation for us, and decreed it! O incomprehensible goodness of God, that for the sake of our salvation hath perfected such sublime works of love! O saving Food, whereby the children of men pass into the children of God, and humanity is absorbed that God may remain! O longed-for, sacred, and adorable Bread, that refreshest the mind, not the belly; that strengthenest the heart, nor weighest down the body; that gladdenest the spirit, nor darkenest the understanding; whereby sensuality is killed, and our own will brought down to nothing, that God's Will may have place, and God's Spirit may have rule, and God's working may come across no hinderance! Of a truth, it was needful for man, who had swallowed the serpent's poisonous morsel, to drink the heavenly draught of Christ's precious Blood, in order to recover the salvation he had lost. Clearly it was fitting that he who had fallen through food that brought him death should be raised up again by the Bread of life; that he who had died through the fruit of the tree, should come to life again in like manner, by the fruit of the Tree, and that he who, through the tree of disobedience, had
been sentenced to everlasting death, should, by the Tree of obedience, be restored to ever- 41
lasting glory. On that former tree hung the food of death, on this latter the medicine of life. In that ran the sap of concupiscence, on this hung the grape-clusters of salvation, which, pressed out in the vine-press of Christ's Passion, gave us that new wine, by which the heart of man is gladdened. Clearly, this is that chosen grape-cluster, sweet to the taste, which they who were said to spy out the earth, that is, the holy apostles, carried on a staff, as they explored with interior eye the kingdom of heaven; as, for example, St. John, who saw in the Apocalypse the Lamb, as it were slain, and St. Paul, who himself also went forth to look at the Land of Promise, when he was rapt into the third heaven, and who, when he had returned to himself, confessed that he knew no other sign, save the grape upon the vine, that is, Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. This is that true grape-cluster which hath no sourness mingled with it; this is that sweet-tasting Bread, or heavenly manna, full of spiritual delights, wherein

there is nothing rough or coarse, for it is not made of the grain of the Old Testament, administered by Moses, but it is the flour of wheat, that is, of the grace shown through Christ Jesus; no mere figure, but the truth.

Wherefore, let no man forget to eat this Bread, lest his heart should wither. For as we 42
fell into ruin through food, so by food we must be quickened again to life. Of that former food it was said: "In whatsoever day thou shalt eat thereof, thou shalt surely die." But of this is it said: "If any man shall eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever." As often, therefore, as, through the cheating of Satan, that wicked serpent, we have fallen into sins, and have drunk the cup of death when held out to us by the enemy's temptation, so often ought we to make ourselves ready to partake of this heavenly medicine, with sorrow, and penance, and devotion, and burning longing. Never let us cease at all to succour our sick and suffering souls, since to no man doth our tender-hearted Lord refuse His grace, nor is there anything He is more ready to give than Himself. And, of a surety, whatever favours, whatever grace our Lord Jesus brought into this world, and gave to man when He took his nature, all this He bringeth with Him, and bestoweth upon every man who worthily partaketh of this worshipful Sacrament. Moreover, whatever virtues Christ performed during His Life,—all the fruit of His Death, Resurrection and Ascension, the blessedness of His gracious Body, the virtue of His precious Blood, and lastly, the merits of His most noble Soul,—all this He bringeth with Him into
the soul that worthily receiveth Him. What more desirest thou? In this most august Sacra- 43
ment, whatever can be thought of, or desired, is received. For herein is received the true Son of God, Jesus Christ, very God and very Man, ever one God with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Truly, then, it was right to say, that whatever virtues or merit Christ performed, and obtained in His Life and Passion, all this is received in this Sacrament by the soul that is worthily prepared. Nay, our sweet Jesus is ready to give us all these virtues through His tender and bountiful goodness, just as if we had performed them ourselves. Let us hasten, therefore, zealously to cleanse our hearts from every stain of sin, and to adorn them with virtues and good works, that we may be always fit and worthy to receive this saving food, to the everlasting glory of our most gracious Maker. Amen.

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THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A devout Prayer to the Worshipful Sacrament.

Almighty God, and Lord Jesus Christ, Word of the Father, Eternal Truth, most merciful Redeemer, most just Judge, how incomprehensible are Thy judgments over the children of men! how terrible art Thou to the wicked, how tender and loving to the good! Behold I, Thy poor, vile, and sinful creature, trembling and groaning, come before Thee, the Eternal Truth, from Whom no secrets are hid, Whose eyes search out, in all clearness, not only the works, but the very inmost depth of man, as to the intention of his heart, wherewith all his works are done. O my God, Thou art very good, yet Thine infinite Justice, all piercing Truth, awful Wisdom, and terrible judgments, press sore upon me even unto death, and make me fear to come into Thy presence; for I am stained with many sins, whereby I have grievously stirred Thee to anger. But Thine infinite loving-kindness, and great tenderness and goodness, which are over all Thy works, these make me breathe again, and hope for salvation and pardon.

Behold, that deceitful and envious serpent hath held out to me the food of death under a pleasing shape, and I, a stranger to the light of Thy grace, discerning not good from evil, 45
have given consent to the wicked one: I have eaten, and am poisoned. To whom now shall I fly, O most tender God, save to Thee? Thou art the salvation of man, the Lamb without stain, that takest away all the stains of sin, and washest and healest in Thine own most pure Blood, all the corruption and infection of the poisonous serpent. Wherefore, with tender trust I fly beneath the wings of Thy gentle loving-kindness. Before Thee I throw myself in all lowliness, not presuming on any virtue of mine, but laden with the heavy burden of my sins, that by groans, and tears, and prayer, I may move Thee to pity, O my God, Whom I have offended by my lusts, and pleasures, and pride, and vanity, and, alas! too much by my own evil will. All unclean I come unto Thee, but Thou art the source of mercy and grace; if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. Wounded unto death I come to Thee, but Thou art my God, Thou art the medicine of life. Behold! I confess to Thee my sins. Lord! if Thou wilt, Thou canst help me; and, indeed, Thou alone canst help me.

Oh! of a truth, it is but little for Thee to give what to me is most profitable to receive.
Remember, I beseech Thee, O tender Jesus, that comforting word of Thine, which Thou, 46
the Eternal Truth, Last spoken; that "Thou desirest not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live." O faithful Lover of men, lo, with my whole heart, and with every power of my soul, I turn to Thee. Help me, before my soul die! For without Thee I cannot but die, since Thou hast said: "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye shall have no life in you." Behold! I am nigh unto death, for I have turned away from Thee, the medicine of my soul, and the Bread of Life! My heart hath withered within me, so that I am forced to beg my bread upon the earth, that is to say,

to go after earthly and temporal consolation, for I have gone far away from Thee, the food and nourishment of heaven. Wherefore it is, that, hungry, and sick, and crippled, I now come to Thee, the Father of mercy, the well of loving-kindness. With lowly prayer I knock at the door of Thy divine grace and mercy, and at Thy fatherly Heart. Oh! hear my prayer: grant unto me the desire of my heart, fill the hungry one with good things, refresh the thirsty one, quicken my languor, heal my sickness, for Thou alone canst heal me.

O most merciful Samaritan, pass not by on the other side of Thy poor weak servant, but take pity upon me, and pour into my wounds Thy wine and oil. It was love that drew Thee down from heaven, that Thou mightest redeem Adam our father; let that same love 47
move Thee now to heal me, the weakest of his children. Nor is it only, O kind Jesus, because Thou art so very necessary unto me in my weakness, that I desire to receive Thee, but it is also by reason of the great love and longing which I feel for Thee, O my Lord and Saviour, the only love of my heart. For Thy grace preventing me, and Thy love first shown unto me, have so strengthened my heart in faith, and hope, and love towards Thee, that I cannot fear Thee or fly from Thee, as if Thou wert a terrible judge that can never be appeased. But I am forced to go and meet Thee, that I may take Thee, and embrace Thee with inmost love, as my tender-hearted Father and sweet Lover. In power Thou art most mighty, in wisdom most glorious, in goodness most perfect, in gifts most bountiful, in nature most beautiful, in conversation most holy, in fruit most delightful, in taste most sweet. Thou art full of comfort and grace, Thou art all-desirable. O sweetest Lord, although the heavens cannot contain Thy greatness, and I am such a poor, little, vile worm of earth, that I am not worthy to receive from Thee even the least of Thy good gifts, yet not even by all Thy gifts canst Thou fulfil the longing of my heart, unless Thou givest me Thyself! Nay, the viler I am, the 48
more Thy goodness will be praised, and the more will all men marvel thereat, that Thou, the Lord of glory, shouldst vouchsafe to come unto me, a poor, wretched, and weak man. O most merciful Jesus, Who didst not shrink from the feasts of publicans and sinners, nor didst abhor the touch of the woman who was a sinner, do Thou visit my soul in its desolation! Come, and say unto my soul: “I am thy salvation.” O out-flowing abyss of divine goodness, that fillest the heavens and the earth, and all that in them is, out of Whose plenitude all the saints flow over with delights, and are satisfied in all abundance, fill me wholly with Thyself! To do this, belongeth to Thy power; but how to do this, and by what means, belongeth to Thy wisdom, while the perfecting of the work belongeth to Thy goodness. Vouchsafe, also, so to adorn my heart with the riches of Thy grace, that I may seek for no curious adornment beneath Thyself, but that all things temporal may be to me vile as dung. O heavenly Sweetness, I long to eat Thee all; and to be all eaten by Thee. I desire, O my Lord, to be all consumed by Thee, and in myself to be brought down to nothing. I wish to die in myself, and to live in Thee, to be likewise transformed and incorporated by Thee, and to rest for everlasting in Thee, my blessed origin. Thou art the source and origin of all things that are, and by Thee, 49

and in Thee, according to Thine eternal thought of us, we live and are. Of a truth, our heart is restless, unless it find rest in Thee, its origin.

O Almighty upholder of my being, draw me into Thyself, and do Thou Thyself come down in mercy to me. Form again in Thee, according to its first purity and integrity, that fair likeness of Thee, which I have corrupted within me. O purest principle of my essence, which is created, indeed, within me, but increate in Thee according to Thine eternal idea, I beseech Thee, by that burning love of Thine, whereby Thou didst suffer Thy pure Heart to be pierced, that through its pierced opening Thou mightest lead me back into the uncreated Heart of God, come down, come down, quickly to me, and bring together with Thee Thy most gracious Father, for in grace Thou knowest it is His Will, not to send Thee out of Himself, but to be Himself together with Thee! O sweet Jesus, I beseech Thee, baptize me many times, purify and cleanse me in Thy pierced and wounded Heart, that I may be made worthy to be brought into the loving Heart of Thy Eternal Father, where He may vouchsafe
to receive me as His adopted son, through Thee His own Son, co-eternal and co-equal. 50
Amen.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A devout Exercise on the Passion of our Lord.

Nowhen the time drew nigh that our Lord Jesus was to pass out of this world to the Father, having Himself made His testament as a most faithful father, and left it to His beloved disciples, that is to say, the best and most excellent good that His fatherly Heart could think of, even His own most sacred Body to be their food, and His precious Blood to he their drink:—and this He did to give them a most sure proof of His burning love, to leave behind Him an everlasting memorial or monument of His Passion and Death, and of all His works, and to deliver to them a signal, and certain and precious pledge of their future glory—when this, I say, had been actually accomplished and ended, and when He had sung a hymn to God the Father, He went forth with His disciples to the Mount of Olives, across the brook Cedron, where was a certain garden, to which often for the sake of prayer He was wont to go with His disciples. 51 And He said to them, "Sit here, watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." But He took with Him Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, the three most secret, faithful, and best loved of His friends, that to those to whom He had shown the glory of His Godhead in His Transfiguration, He might now show the bitterness of His sorrow in His Passion.

Stand here, then, as many as love God, and observe and see all that our Lord hath done for our souls. Come here, all ye who have been redeemed by the sinless blood of the innocent Lamb, Christ Jesus, that ye may see and understand all that He hath suffered for our iniquities. Behold! now the Book of Life is opened, and its seven seals are broken; the book in which truth shineth forth, and all the mysteries of wisdom and knowledge are hidden, which is full of doctrine, and overfloweth with mysteries. Now is the mirror of all virtues clearly shown to the eyes of all. Now is the old veil rent, and all the wrappings and coverings of figures are taken away. Now is the Holy of Holies thrown wide open by Jesus the High Priest; for He hath offered His own Blood in sacrifice, and revealed all hidden holiness, and all secret sacraments and mysteries.

Now is shown the deep well of the patriarch Jacob, out of which flow rivers of living 52 water, whereof not only the Israelites, but even the Samaritans can draw, and refresh their many flocks and herds, and wash away all filth and uncleanness. Here also is seen the bitter and troubled sea of affliction, which, although it was formerly so terrible, that at its very name man stood aghast, yet, now the true Jonas, after that He hath bidden Himself be thrown therein, hath so turned into sweetness, and so quieted and soothed its every tempest, that men can place themselves therein as in a delicious bath, and cleanse themselves therein, nor fear any more, but even glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so it is that in our own day we see very many gladly take His cross to themselves, and with great cheerfulness follow their Lord Jesus Christ.

Here also is Jacob's ladder placed before our eyes, the top of which reacheth not only to heaven, but even to the bosom of God the Father, and by which not the angels only, but the Lord of the angels mounteth up, followed by publicans and sinners. At the top of this ladder sits the Father of Mercies, with His bosom wide open, lovingly to receive as many as love His Son.

Now also is brought back to our remembrance that marvellous pool at Jerusalem, which
beyond measure is moved and troubled by the descent of the great Angel, Christ Jesus, so 53
that not only one sick man, but as many as are ill, and all who are unclean, and whosoever wash in this saving water of sorrow, that is, of His Passion, are healed therein, and cleansed. Now, too, is opened the immense treasury of the rich Master of the household, whereby the poor, and the weak, and all who are heavy laden, may be gladdened with most generous gifts, so that every man may have leave to draw from the sacred bowels of Jesus Christ whatever he knoweth he is without. For plentiful grace floweth therefrom; and that it may flow still more plentifully, they have been torn and opened in many places.

Now also is celebrated the glorious victory of Christians, because the true David, Christ Jesus, humble indeed, and small in stature, but mighty in strength, armed not with the armour of Saul, but with a staff, that is, His own Cross, and five pebbles,[1] hath fearlessly attacked and battled down the cruel Goliath, the enemy of the people of Israel.

Moreover, here is made known to us a wonderful sacrament, and most high mystery, in that the Lord of the angels hath vouchsafed to be made an outcast of men; the Most High
hath become the lowest; the only-begotten of God the Father hath freely offered Himself 54
for guilty sinners to die upon the cross, that He may nail sin to the cross, and destroy death, and blot out the hand-writing of our debts in His own precious Blood.

Lastly, the fire which our Father Who is in heaven hath sent upon the earth, is so mightily kindled, that the flame thereof reacheth unto heaven, and melteth by its intemperate heat the frost-bound earth, and breaketh through the hard and stony places. Of a truth, whosoever cometh nigh to this fire by devout meditation, will not be able to escape its heat. For whose is the heart, however stony, that will not melt, when it perceiveth the immense goodness of Christ Jesus, how greatly He longeth after us poor worms of earth, how eagerly He hath thirsted after our salvation, how gladly He hath offered Himself to death, how generously He hath given His precious Blood, and His young and beautiful Body, and all that He had, that He might redeem us, sinners though we were, from damnation? For it was by no compulsion or force, but by His own free will, that He came to the place known to him who betrayed Him, that He might the more easily be found by him.

Behold, then, O faithful soul, and look upon this bold-hearted David, thy God and Lord,
how He burneth with exceeding great desire to begin the combat, and to lay down His life 55

1 i. e. His five Wounds.

for His people and the house of Israel. Behold, I pray thee, how, quickened by love, He cometh the first of all to the place of battle to fight for thee. Of a truth, before His enemies had come, He had already exercised His limbs for the fight. And although only by lowliness, and love, and prayer, and long-suffering, He had determined to do battle, before those envious ones had laid their cruel hands upon Him, yet gladly did He take suffering upon Himself when it did come, so that no pain can be likened to His pain.

56

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Of the great Sorrow and Anguish which Christ underwent in the Garden, at the thought of His Passion hanging over Him.

When Christ had now come into the garden, He began to be sorrowful and afraid, and very heavy; and by reason of the vehemence of His inward pain, He trembled outwardly in all His members, nor was He ashamed to confess to His disciples this sorrow, and weakness, and trouble of His Body, for He said: "My Soul is sorrowful even unto death."

Let us also go and see what is the cause of so great a sorrow. And, indeed, for many reasons was Christ so sad; but we will here only touch on two reasons, which may the more forcibly stir us up to compassion and love.

The first reason was, because of our many and grievous sins, and obstinate malice, and great ingratitude, and because we were so utterly devoid of all holy fear. For on account of these things was Jesus sorrowful. For we both read, and know by experience, that if God were to permit a man to see his own sins, as He Himself seeth them, straightway his heart would break for exceeding great sorrow; or he would lose his senses, when he beheld how he had wronged, and despised, and thought lightly of his Maker and Redeemer, his God and Lord, and how basely and unworthily he had deformed his own beautiful and noble 57
soul. Now, of a truth, Christ took all the sins of the world upon Himself, and of His own will He allowed sorrow of heart for these sins to come upon Him, even as if He Himself had committed them. And because of His divine wisdom, which saw all things, He beheld all sins, especially those that were most hateful, that ever have been, or ever will be; and, at the same time, He beheld the contempt and wrong which they inflicted on His Father. Who then can, in any way, understand how great must have been His grief and sorrow? For He was ever urged on to promote His Father's honour with His whole strength; nor did He thirst after anything, save His Father's glory and the salvation of souls.

Amongst the Jews, indeed, it was a custom, that if they heard God blasphemed or wronged, they rent their garments as a sign of grief, in order to show thereby that they sought after God's honour. Now, if the Jews, false hypocrites as they were, did this, how much must Christ, the true Son of God, have sorrowed, when He saw all the wrong and contempt which were daily inflicted on His Father Who is in heaven? For, alas! even now it is easy enough to see, how, day by day, men think nothing at all about offending God by deadly sin. For this reason, therefore, Christ took upon Himself grief and sorrow, even so 58
far as He could, still remaining alive. Yet, not as the Jews did He rend His garments as a proof of His bitter sorrow, but He rent asunder His own Body, so that a sweat of blood broke forth from all His members, by reason of His exceeding great anguish and dread, even as the juice of the grape when in the winepress. And that He might show us how this sorrow was consuming the very inward marrow of His Soul, when He was straightened by this

deadly anguish, He said: “My Soul is sorrowful even unto death.” Of Phinees, the son of Eleazar, we read in the Bible, that he avenged a wrong done to God. For when he saw a certain Israelite sinning with a Moabitish woman, he burned with anger, and thrust both of them through, and for this was beloved by God. In like manner Moses avenged a wrong done to God, thousands being put to death for adoring the golden calf, after which the Lord was appeased. What, then, was the vengeance taken by the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who was ever consumed by a burning thirst after justice, and Who placed all His zeal in this one thing, namely, that He might increase His Father’s glory, and turn aside, and prevent whatever was contrary to His Will,—when He beheld not merely a single sin, but the crimes of the whole world? 59 Who can understand how all His inward parts were shaken with grief, how all His limbs trembled by reason of His burning thirst for justice, how His whole man was moved to avenge the wrong done to His Father? Yet in this His anger He remembered mercy, for He was full, not of truth only, but of grace and loving-kindness. Therefore said He unto His Father: “O My Father, Thou knowest that I have ever loved Thee, and done Thy most gracious will; Thou seest also that My Heart is just, and how exceedingly I thirst to do Thy will, and to avenge the wrong done to Thee by Adam and his posterity. Yet, as mercy is Mine, and My nature is goodness, and I have come, not to take vengeance, but to reconcile; not to strike, but to heal; not to kill, but to redeem; and as Adam’s sin cannot pass unavenged, I beseech Thee, Father in heaven, to take vengeance upon Me. I take all the sins of man upon Myself. If this tempest of anger hath risen up because of Me, cast Me into the red and bitter sea of My Passion, let Me be swallowed up, and overwhelmed in the abyss of a shameful death, if only Thy wrath may pass away, and man’s debt may be justly cancelled.”

Thus it was that this innocent Lamb took upon Himself all the sins of the world, and allowed such great vengeance to come upon Him,—yea, so great was the agony which He 60 took upon Him in the garden, that had it been greater, His natural life must have given way. O unutterable goodness of Christ Jesus! O love beyond our poor understanding! All our sins did He desire to bear, Who alone was without sin. He, Who is the joy of heaven, for our sakes is made sorrowful even unto death; and for our sinful pleasures it was His will to suffer Himself this deadly agony. And because He is the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the Wisdom of God, in Whom the Father’s will is ever reflected as in a most pure mirror, therefore it was that He clearly knew by what works and actions His Father was to be appeased, and by what ransom our debt was to be paid; namely, by bitter sorrow, and humble prayer, and rough penance, and by patient bearing of suffering and affliction. And, at the same time, He left to all men, as His teaching and doctrine, that they also should strive to appease His Father by their works, whenever they may have fallen into sin. For this reason, He wished to be Himself the first of all to appease Him. And, indeed, so great was the sorrow and grief that He took upon Him, that they out-balance the sins of the whole world, and 61

were not only more than the strength of His Body could bear, but pressed down His Soul even into the straits of death.

Then, falling flat on His Face upon the earth, humbly, and fervently, and with long-suffering, He prayed, and wept bitterly, not tears of water only, but tears of blood; and this in such abundance, that great drops of His Blood fell down upon the ground. Nay, they fell from His whole Body, and from every limb, that thus all His members might share in one common sorrow, and celebrate, as it were, the sad funeral rites for the sins and damnation of the human race, and might show, in very deed, the compassion by which they had been moved, and the love with which they were burning, and how ready they all were to suffer for our sakes; since not even for a little while were they able to put off their affliction, even before they were tortured by the enemy. Burning with love they were beforehand with the enemy, and they began to contend among themselves, and to tremble, and to shed blood, as if they suffered from the enemy's delay.

Oh! who hath such a heart of stone as not to turn at the thought of this fiery love of Christ? Who is so ungrateful as not to turn with all his members to his Saviour, Whom he seeth engaged in such eager toil, and suffering such cruel agony in the work of our salvation? Who hath a heart so perverse, who can be so cold in love as not to strive, according to the 62
poor little measure of his strength, to repay love for love, and sorrow for sorrow, and prayer for prayer, and tears for tears, and resignation for resignation, and offering for offering, and agony for agony, and blood for blood, and death for death, and charity for His burning love? Oh! what can be dearer to a loving and grateful soul in this life, than to repay her lover even one little drop of love, in return for that exceeding bitter chalice, all of which, He, for the love of her and for her salvation, drank even to the dregs? Oh! where is the heart that can understand the compassion and sorrow that Christ felt, when He beheld in the mirror of God's Providence the wretched deformity and misery of His own members and creatures, which He had created in such purity, and nobleness, and holiness, and glory, when He saw what we had lost, and what we had deserved? Alas! how all the bowels of His compassion were then moved! Even as a tender father mourneth for the death of his only-begotten son, so did Christ Jesus sorrow for our wretchedness and unhappiness. Oh! who can contemplate, without compunction and without tears, this loving Joseph falling on the neck of each of us, and kissing His brethren, weeping, likewise, over each of them, comforting them, and forgiving their sins; nay, taking all their sins upon Himself, and punishing their crimes in 63
Himself with sorrow of heart, and making the wanderings of each one of them, as it were, His own guilt. Oh! what exceeding great labour did this innocent Lamb undergo, in order to reconcile His Father unto us! Even as a mother bringeth forth her child into the world with great pain and sorrow, so did Christ make us to be born again to life everlasting with intolerable agony and torment.

O my soul, and all ye who love God, come, and let us follow now Christ Jesus with sorrow of heart and inward devotion, and with tears and pity, into the garden. Let us contemplate with the eyes of our heart, Jesus, that is, our Saviour, the Lamb without spot, how He bore therein all our sins; how heavily, all alone, He trod the wine-press, that like the grape that is pressed with all care, He, too, might be pressed in the wine-press of His Passion, and might pour upon us richly, and give us to drink, the red wine of His precious Blood, so as to make us drunk with His love. Let us see, I pray you, how the glory of the angels became sorrowful even unto death, that He might carry us into joy everlasting. For, in order to rescue us from the torments of hell, He bore in Himself all the pains which we had merited; and He, the Lord of might, at Whose look the angels tremble, and every knee is bowed, appeared 64 not as God, but as the poorest, and most abject, and most desolate man, whom the world possessed. See how He lieth with His Face upon the ground, in much anguish of spirit, covered with a bloody sweat, forsaken even by His Father as well as by all men. There He lieth, I say, and prayeth, not as God, not as a just man, but, as it were, a public malefactor, as some dreadful sinner, as if He were not worthy to be heard by His Father, or, at least, as if He were ashamed to lift up His eyes to heaven. Doth it not seem as if He had been cast away by God, and were held to be God's enemy, that we who were, of a truth, God's enemies, might be made His friends and elect children? It is written: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Yet see, how our sweet Jesus, of His own free will, gave Himself up into those Hands, and gladly suffered all the wrath, and vengeance, and punishment of God His Father, which we had deserved, to fall down upon Himself. This is why He suffered Himself to be so cruelly scourged, and reproached, and beaten, and wounded, and, last of all, to be put to a shameful death. Oh, what resignation have we here! What an offering of Himself! What a love is this! His disciples were heavy with sleep; He alone remained watching, to pray and labour, and, like a tender and faithful shepherd, to guard His sheep 65 with loving care. Nay, thrice He prayed, before He was comforted. O, may such sorrow, I pray, such faithfulness, such love beyond all bounds, touch these hearts of ours! For it was we that, by our sins, brought this sorrow and cross upon Him. Oh! we have thought so very little of offending the God of glory; yet see, how fearful was the sweat, and the toil, and the sorrow, which Christ had to suffer, in order to be able to reconcile His Father unto us! Dear, indeed, was the ransom which He was forced to pay for our redemption. Let us sorrow, then, I pray, together with our Saviour, in His exceeding bitter sorrow and affliction; let us pray together with Him, and watch and suffer with Him. Let us also do somewhat for the sake of our salvation; when we see how zealously Christ Jesus, in every member of His Body, and in every power of His Soul, is busied about us. And if we cannot shed tears of blood, at least let our eyes rain down tears of water. If we cannot weep with Christ in all our members,

at least let our eyes weep. And if we are still so hard, and the vein of tears is so stopped up within us, that not even with our eyes are we able to weep, at least let us desire to weep in our heart. Let us fall down upon our face before Christ, and say to Him: 66

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Prayer and Offering for Sins.

O Most gracious God, have mercy upon me! O King of glory, be merciful to me a sinner! For the sake of Thine own goodness, pardon me, for ever having turned my heart away from the right path of Thy commandments, and for having followed my own wicked will, when it drew me into sin, and for having cast off and thrust aside Thy holy will, that was inviting me to virtue. How, O my God, can I be so blind of heart, as even for a moment to turn away from Thee, from Whom come all salvation and every good thing, and to turn to that which is earthly, and perishable, and will soon fall away, and from which nothing cometh to me, but loss, and perdition, and all wretchedness? Oh! how can I take pleasure in anything at all, save in the remembrance of the immense benefits which Thou hast conferred upon me? How can I seek for comfort, or refreshment of mind, in aught, save in Thy most sacred and bitter Passion, and in Thy sweet wounds, that are ever dropping down with honey? 67 What can I ever care for, except to please Thee, and do Thy most gracious will, and love Thee with my whole heart, and, according to the poor little measure of my strength, repay Thee somewhat for Thy labours and pains, and, above all, for Thine unutterable love, which Thou hast lavished upon me? O, most gracious Lord, what more couldst Thou have done for me, which Thou hast not done? What was the love that overcame Thy tender Heart, O most loving Jesus, and caused Thee to offer Thyself willingly to die for my sins? Why didst Thou so thirst to drink the chalice of Thy bitter Passion, that before Thine enemies came upon Thee, Thou didst place upon Thy shoulders the too heavy cross, and not only wentest forth to meet Thine enemies, but didst inwardly crucify Thyself, even unto death, before they reached Thee, and didst inflict upon Thyself inward death through bitter sorrow, long before they inflicted upon Thee outward death? For the thirst of working out our salvation so burned within Thee, that Thou didst accomplish in Thyself whatever lay within Thy power; and didst only leave to Thine enemies to do what Thou couldst not accomplish in Thyself. Ah, Lord, my God, behold I, too, am not worthy to live, for it was I that brought upon Thee this most bitter sorrow, when I was not ashamed to commit, for the sake of a 68 little moment's vile pleasure, what Thou hadst to wash away in Thy precious Blood, and to blot out by Thy death! Oh! how grievous are my sins, which called for so great a satisfaction, and so noble a victim.

O most loving Father! how could Thy fatherly Heart suffer Thee not to hear Thine only and beloved Son, as He lay with His Face upon the ground, wrestling with Thee in prayer, and in His exceeding inward anguish sweating even blood? Why were Thy fatherly bowels moved not at the sight of Thy beloved Son, to take away from Him that most bitter chalice, as He so humbly prayed of Thee? What is man, O Father of mercies, that Thou so lovest him, that Thou art ready to give Jesus, Thy most obedient Son, for vile sinners, who have

always offended Thee, and covered Thee with wrongs and contumely? Dost Thou love us more than Him? He had to die, that we might live; He was sorrowful, that we might rejoice; He was wounded, that we might be healed; He shed His precious Blood, that we might be cleansed. He ever sought Thine honour: what was pleasing in Thy sight, He carefully performed. At all times, and in all ways, He was the expression of all virtue; why, then, wert Thou so cruel towards Him? 69 Why dost Thou deliver Him up for man, who was already damned, and who was still a rebel against Thee? How hath He ever deserved this from Thee? Or, what didst Thou foresee in man, that thou lovest him so, and art so faithful to him? For, of a truth, the most precious of Thy treasures, and the highest and best gift that Thy fatherly Heart could give, Thou gavest for man's redemption,—even Jesus, Thy beloved Son, the Word of Thy Heart, by Which Thou speakest to us the intention of Thy mind, and through Which Thou makest known to us Thy love, wherewith Thou hast loved us with such fatherly tenderness from the beginning.

Oh! how is it that this burning love of Thine doth not absorb and melt us in a moment, when we see Thee attentive to the groans of exiles upon earth, and hearkening to the cry of men who ought to be prisoners in hell, and yet leaving Thine only-begotten One in the anguish of death, sweating great drops of blood, praying to Thee with His Face upon the ground, watering the very earth with tears of blood, as if in no way He belonged to Thee? O sweetest Father, why, or for whose sake, hast Thou forsaken Him? Hearken, I pray Thee, O tender-hearted Father, to this sorrow of His Heart; look down upon Him as He trembleth in His agony; let those bitter groans of His mount up into Thy Heart; and His Sweat of 70 Blood, flowing from His whole Body, move Thee to pity! See how He is bowed down to the ground; hearken, at last, to His fervent prayer, for all His members cry out to Thee for mercy. Grant Him the desire of His Heart, for He turneth wholly to Thee in perfect resignation, and poureth forth His supplication in truest love. It is not His own comfort that He seeketh, but the salvation of His brethren. It is not His own sin for which He grieveth, but my iniquities; it is not His own crimes, but mine, for which He mourneth; for never even once hath He sinned against Thee, whereas my offences against Thee are manifold.

O most merciful Father! by the love and suppliant prayers of Thy beloved Son, pardon the wanderings of Thy sinful servant. Accept the worthy sacrifice of Thy only-begotten Son, and remember not the wrong done to Thee by Thy wicked servant, for far more hath He paid Thee than all my debt. Oh! if Thou wouldst only weigh together my malice and His goodness, my crimes and the merits of His bitter Passion, surely the latter would outweigh the former. For what wickedness can be so great, as not to be blotted out by such sorrow, such affliction, such obedience, such lowliness, such unconquerable patience, and, above all, such unutterable love? 71 What crime can be so enormous, as not to be outweighed by Christ's most bitter Death? O heavenly Father, see! I offer Thee my Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, Thy best-loved Son, with great devotion and gratitude, in union with that love,

by which Thou didst send Him to me from Thy fatherly Heart, in order that He might take my nature, and free me from eternal death. See! I offer Thee this unutterable sorrow of His, this anguish incomprehensible to us, but known to Thee alone, which here in the garden He underwent for all my sins, and instead of the sorrow and contrition which by right I ought to feel. Yes, I offer Thee His sweat of blood, for the tears which I have not in my eyes, which for hardness of heart I cannot shed. I offer Thee, also, His most humble and burning prayers for all my lukewarmness, and sloth, and negligence. Lastly, I offer Thee all His grievous labours, the practice of His virtues, His rough and austere life, and all that He did in His human nature; all the bitter torments which He suffered in His Passion, together with all the praise of the spirits on high, and the merits of all the saints, as a worthy sacrifice to Thy eternal honour and glory, for all my sins by which I have ever offended Thee, and for the virtues which I have neglected to perform, as also for all the living and the dead, for 72
whom Thou, O my God, wishest me to pray, and I am bound to pray; that Thou mayest grant to each of them who are still alive, through Thy beloved Son, whatever Thou knowest to be necessary for them to enable them to serve Thee in that state to which, by Thy merciful loving-kindness, they have been called.

Another cause of Christ's sorrow was, that He foresaw all the fearful and cruel torments which He was now, at this very moment, about to suffer, and this as perfectly as if felt them already present. And because in very truth He was a man able to suffer like other men, of a tender and noble complexion, beyond what any understanding of man can grasp, for this very reason His fear was the more vehement, so that outwardly He trembled in all His limbs, and inwardly was sorrowful even unto death. He had undertaken to redeem man from his damnation, and to pay his whole debt, and therefore His heavenly Father, as a just Judge, entered into strict account with Him, and opened that great and ancient account-book which containeth all the debts of men, and in which He clearly saw all the sins of the world. At the same time He shewed Him the ancient hand-writing against us, and He laid before His eyes the price beyond all reckoning, the immense sum, by which these debts must be paid, so that our sweet Jesus saw His whole Passion as openly as when He suffered it. Oh! 73
then, what must have been the sorrow, what the anguish, what the fear, which seized upon Christ's tender Heart and all His members?

Here, too, we ought to notice, how our Saviour, Christ Jesus, had always lifted Himself up, and stretched Himself forth both in spirit and with His whole strength, to show reverence and honour to His Father. For the Spirit of God had gently embraced His nature with all its powers, and had made them subject to the law, and all the Scriptures which concerned Him, so as to perfect them according to His Father's gracious will. Therefore it was that He offered obediently into the hands of His Father Almighty, His Body and Soul, and whatever He had, desiring that in Him might be accomplished all that had been decreed and fore-ordained by the eternal wisdom of God and the counsel of the Holy Ghost, and in this Spirit He enjoyed

both peace and quiet, in that He had resigned Himself simply, without any choosing of this or that, to God the Father. But, on the other hand, looking down on the tenderness of His complexion, and the cruelty of the torments already hanging over Him, He became sorrowful even unto death; and here, so great were His suffering and struggle, that they surpass all 74
human understanding, and by reason of the exceeding inward agony, outwardly He trembled all over. For according to the spirit He desired to die, but all His Flesh shrank from the bitterness of death. His Spirit, indeed, was at peace, being united and subject to God, but His sensible and sensitive nature had so fully drunk in the bitterness of His overhanging Passion, as imaged before His mind, that He was beyond measure troubled and sore afraid.

After this, so fierce grew the struggle, and with such force did He compel His sensitive nature to consent to these horrible sufferings, that from the excessive strain His Blood poured forth like sweat from all His limbs. For by reason of the fervour of His prayer, and of His dread and horror of death, His Blood had flown up to His Heart. Then His strong love driving out all fear, as well as His burning desire to accomplish His Father's will, and of redeeming us, like some hammer or mighty force, struck down and overcame this fear and sensitiveness, and forcibly pressed out the blood which had meanwhile grown heated, so that, from the sudden shock, it burst forth from His open pores, and flowed down mingled with His other sweat. Oh! who can understand the greatness and bitterness of this pain? Oh! by what anguish was the sweet Heart of our Saviour shaken, which, placed as it were 75
between two pressures, that of fear and of love, was sorely straitened, fear, namely, straitening Him in His lower nature, and love in His higher?

And although fear was strong, yet was it utterly cast out by the mightiness of His love. But oh! the sufferings, the incomprehensible pain which Christ underwent in this winepress? Oh! how did His material nature compassionate His sensitive nature, when He saw the latter so straitened and oppressed? How faithfully in its great compassion did that higher nature make intercession, even as an advocate, for the lower? "Father," it said, "if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me:" and then again, as an excellent peace-maker, it added in the spirit, "My Father, if this chalice cannot pass away, except I drink it, Thy will be done." As if He would say: "Now that Thou hast unfolded unto Me the great debt of the human race, and the price by which it must be paid, from which, indeed, all My tender nature, tender above all understanding, shrinketh in fear and trembling; yet the desire which I have of fulfilling Thy will, and of redeeming man, utterly overpowereth Me. I accept then the condition, and I approve what Thou demandest, and see! this red Blood of Mine, just shed, shall be the pledge, that with money of the same kind I will pay the rest of the debt." 76
O love of Christ Jesus, Thou art above all comprehension! Who is there that would not be inflamed by such burning love as this? Who is able even to think of the fruit, and usefulness, and salvation, and eternal good, which were born to us when this most saving word was uttered, "Thy will be done?" Of a truth, of all words ever uttered that was the most saving;

for by it the Son of God was taken in exchange by His Eternal Father, so that from the moment when it was uttered, our heavenly Father laid aside His ancient enmities, and changed all His wrath into mercy, and took us back into His grace, so that we have become the sons of God, and joint-heirs with Christ of the kingdom of heaven, who before were the children of wrath, and dwellers in darkness. Oh! who can sound the abyss of this love, whereby Christ uttered this word?

He foresaw, indeed, all the torments that hung over Him, even down to the least blow. He beheld, too, how grievously, how cruelly He was to suffer; nay, He saw, too, our exceeding great hardness of heart, and ingratitude, and that amongst so many men His precious Blood would have no effect, no fruit; nevertheless, so great was His love for us, that He was ready rather to suffer Himself to be crucified even a thousand times, than allow, so far as lay with 77
Him, even one man to perish.

Come, then, all ye who are devoted to Him, and as many as are of good will, and who desire to make progress in virtue. Contemplate here in the garden Him Who is the mirror of all virtue, the very path of perfection. Follow your Lord, walk in the same footsteps in which He hath gone before you. Learn here to lay aside your own will, and to do God's will. Learn to overcome and to bring into captivity to the Spirit your sensuality and vicious learnings, which are drawing you away from God, that so, according to St. Paul's advice, you may have all your senses under bridle, and your will obedient to the service of Christ. Learn, here, that in nothing ought ye to seek your own selves, but rather God's honour, and your neighbour's salvation. Lastly, learn here not to give in to the desires of nature, or the persuasion of your own wisdom, but rather to those things which God asketh and requireth of you, whatever they may be, whether in acting, or in abstaining from action, or in suffering, or in prosperity, or in adversity; even as Christ did not His own will, but His Father's, although to do this was a trial to His nature, and went against it, and His sensitiveness shrank from it utterly. Far more useful will it be for you to follow Christ and His divine inspirations, 78
than to be wise according to your own conceits and feelings, however grand and good these may seem. For He Who alone was offended, perfectly knew, when you knew it not, in what way He would be appeased and reconciled. Whatever, therefore, He requireth of you, that give unto Him; wheresoever He may either lead or draw you, thither follow Him; yea, not less boldly to the depths of hell, than to the heights of heaven. As He speaketh to you, so answer Him; whatever He commandeth, accomplish without delay; whatever cross He may lay upon you, carry it without murmuring. For the more you are united to Him, and the more you go out of, and deny yourselves, so much the more will ye be lifted up above to Him.

But now, that we have been strengthened for a little while by this little morsel of spiritual teaching, let us turn again to Christ in His affliction, to Christ, I say, still lying upon the ground, as we have seen Him in our meditation, wet with His bloody sweat, and fervently

entreating the Father for us. And now, O my soul, look and see how noble and excellent thou art, and how great is the price with which thou hast been bought. See how greatly the only-begotten of God the Father hath esteemed thee, when for thy sake He delivered Himself to death, and for thy redemption hath shed His precious Blood. Observe, I beseech thee, 79
what are the pains and the labour by which thou hast been restored to health and salvation. Yet thou considerest thyself so vile, that for the short pleasure of a moment, for some trifling temporal thing, thou sellest and losest thyself, whom Christ hath redeemed in His own Blood. See how bitter was all His Passion, the mere thought of which caused Him to shed both blood and water.

But now, with melting hearts, let us see how our loving Lord, after this grievous suffering, lifted up His Head from the ground, and rose from prayer. Oh! how sore were all His limbs from the fearful and great agony which He had undergone. How swollen was that fair face of His, after His burning prayer, covered all over, as it was, by His sweat of blood! How inflamed were His eyes by the tears, which still were thickly flowing! Hear how He addresseth His disciples, and saith: "Sleep on, now, and take your rest." See here the immensity of our Lord's goodness. Not with severity did He upbraid them, but patiently bore with their sloth and weakness. See, too, how the faithful Shepherd watcheth and prayeth for His sheep. Of a truth, by His own fervour He supplied for their sloth and torpor. O, the unutterable kindness of Christ Jesus! The Lord watcheth, while His servants sleep. He alone combateth, 80
that they may remain unhurt. He exposeth Himself to the wolves, that His sheep may escape scatheless from their bite. He did, indeed, love them to the end.

After this He roused them, and said: "Arise, it is enough; behold, he who betrayeth Me is at hand." Think, then, O my soul, that thou art now with Christ in the garden, and that He spake these words to thee. Rise, therefore, O my soul, from the sleep of sin, from thy torpid dream of the deceitful pleasures of earth, and from every delight and convenience of nature; and seizing manfully the cross of penance and affliction, follow Christ thy Lord, and with great compassion, devotion, and inward love, look upon the poor disfigured form of thy Saviour, and think how thou wert the cause of His Passion. Weigh diligently with thyself, how great must have been the inward anguish of His Soul, by the outward signs of His exceedingly afflicted Body. Then throw thyself humbly at His Feet, with as much sorrow and compassion as thou canst obtain from God, and with burning tears and deep heavy sighs, pray to Him thus:
81

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Prayer to the Son for Pardon, and the grace of Self-denial.

O Most merciful Jesus, I beseech Thee by Thy bitter sorrow and anxious grief, when Thou wert made sorrowful even unto death at the inward contemplation of the bitter Passion and shameful death which were so close at hand, so that the strain within Thee made Thee tremble outwardly, and sweat blood and water—by that exceeding great anguish of Thy Soul, when prostrate on Thy Face, Thou didst pray so earnestly to Thy Father, and with simple created love and true resignation, didst struggle with the fear of death, not heeding the horrors of Thy lower powers, but submitting and subjecting Thyself with the created love of Thy Humanity, to the uncreated love of Thy most high Godhead, wert made obedient with Thy full consent to Thy Father, even unto the death of the cross;—by the struggle and mighty effort of that contest, by the intolerable pain of Thy Soul and Body, by the sweat of blood itself which broke forth from all Thy members, and flowed down in great drops upon the ground;—by all this sorrow and grief, I beseech Thee, O tender Jesus, to pour into me 82
true contrition for my sins, and to soften my heart of stone to compunction, and to inflame it to devotion, and to give to my eyes rivers of tears, so that night and day I may weep for having wronged and insulted Thee, and for the numberless sins whereby I have offended Thee, O Lord my God!

Deal not with me, I implore Thee, according to my demerits, but according to Thine infinite mercy; neither enter into judgment with Thy servant, but set, I beseech Thee, this bitter Passion of Thine between Thy judgment and my wretched soul with its sins. And whatever mine iniquities deserve, let Thy bitter Death forgive, and Thy precious Blood wash away for ever. Grant, O most gracious God, that I may deny my own will, and make myself of no reputation, and submit myself and all creatures to Thee, my Lord and Maker, for Thy sake, and that I may feel also that I am the vilest and most unworthy of all Thy creatures; that thus I may be resigned in will, and as free from all choice, as if never I had any will of mine own at all.

O Jesus Christ, most strong and unconquerable Lion, Who hast overcome the world and its prince, do Thou so strengthen, I beseech Thee, my weakness, that I may utterly 83
overcome my sensuality and unmortified rebel nature, and every inordinate affection towards all things in this world beneath Thyself; and that I may put a yoke upon myself, and perfectly and wholly turn away from all that can stain my heart, or come between Thy love and me; in a word, that I may love Thee, my Lord, as purely and as fervently as it is possible for a perishable creature to love. Make, also, my heart so just, and right, and pure, and place it so close to Thy Heart, that between me and Thee there may be found nothing distorted, nothing unjust, nothing unlike Thee; so that in all my conversation, and in all my works, I may seek for nothing, desire nothing, look for nothing, or intend nothing, except to please

Thee, honour Thee, perform whatever is Thy will, and love Thee with my whole heart; and that in this I may ever spend my whole being, in order, in some poor little way, at least, to repay Thy love.

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THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Jesus goeth to meet His Enemies.

Our Lord Jesus, knowing that Judas, His betrayer, had come, surrounded by a devilish crowd of wicked men who were thirsting for His Blood, and who had come with exceeding cruelty to take Him, as if He had been a thief, with lanterns, and swords, and cords, and with a great noise of arms, like an innocent Lamb, with great affection and burning love went forth to meet them, saying: "Whom seek ye?"

Consider now, O my soul, with thy inward eyes, the immense love of thy Saviour; see how above measure He thirsteth to redeem thee. Look how His Heart is boiling over within Him for exceeding burning love. O sweet Jesus, the only comfort of my heart, where is now the fear, which a little before had come upon Thee? Where now are Thy deep groans? Where now are Thy trembling limbs? Where now is Thy great horror of death? While as yet Thine enemies were far from Thee, Thou wert sorrowful even unto death, and in Thy cruel straits Thou didst sweat blood, and Thou didst pray that the Passion that was hanging over Thee might be taken from Thee by Thy Father; but now that Thine enemies are before Thine eyes, roaring like lions, and raging like mad dogs to shed Thine innocent Blood, Thou fearest nothing, Thou tremblest at nothing, and all fear hath gone far from Thee. Thy betrayer hath come with a crowd of blood-thirsty men, cruel wolves; and of Thine own free will Thou 85
goest forth to meet them. What doth this mean, O gracious Jesus, except that perfect love hath cast out fear?

Oh! how perfectly hast Thou gone out of Thyself, O loving Jesus! How well hast Thou prepared a place for Thy heavenly Father, in order that He may accomplish within Thee His own most gracious work according to His will. Oh! how Thou hast spared Thyself in nothing! With what burning thirst hast Thou sought after Thy Father's honour! How mightily hast Thou conquered Thyself through love, being made obedient even unto death! O Jesus, sweet Lover of men, what love is this that hath so swallowed up Thy Heart, that Thou hastenest to death as to a marriage feast, that Thou goest forth to meet Thine enemies, as if they were Thy friends! Thou couldst not even wait till they addressed Thee, but even as a man saluteth his friends, whom he meeteth on the way, so didst Thou address them first, and say: "Whom seek ye?" Oh! of a truth, most gracious Jesus, the fire of love had so worked its way within Thee, and melted, and burnt away the marrow of Thy Soul, that all Thy inner man blessed God the Father Almighty, and all Thy members were stretched like a bow to accomplish Thy Father's gracious will. For Thy uncreated love as God so moved 86
and kindled Thy created love, that Thou wert wholly ready to satisfy that love in all that it required. Hence it was that in Thy thirst Thou didst seize the chalice, from which but a little before Thou didst so greatly shrink; and quickened by love, as a fearless giant, Thou rejoicest to run the way of our salvation.

O most gracious Lord, who is there that would not be inflamed by love like this? Who am I, and Who art Thou, that Thou, the Lord of lords, Thou, the Ruler of heaven and earth, shouldst offer Thyself to such a shameful death, and into the very hands of Thy cruel enemies, for me who am but a poor vile worm of earth; and that Thou shouldst receive him who betrayed Thee as if he were Thy brother? No, not even from Judas, that ungrateful dog, didst Thou turn away, O well-spring of unexhaustible mercy, even when he blushed not to seek a kiss from Thy sacred mouth; but Thou didst gently place that sweet and loving mouth of Thine, in which there was no guile, against that foul mouth of his, overflowing, though it was, with malice. Oh! the incomprehensible gentleness, the wonderful lovingkindness, the unutterable lowliness, the measureless goodness of the Master towards His cruel servant! Of a truth, Lord, it were better for that man if he had never been born! O sweet Jesus, so 87
continual was Thy goodness, that Thou didst show him all the kindness that Thou couldst, in order, if possible, to soften his heart of stone. With kindly, friendly words Thou spakest to him, and saidst: "Friend, why camest thou hither?" As if Thou wouldst say: "Have I deserved this of thee, O Judas? Did I sin against thee, in washing thy feet, in bending My knees to thee, in refreshing thee with My Body and Blood? Friend, wherefore hast thou come? Dost thou hold Me of less value than thirty pieces of silver? Why hast thou turned away from Me, Who honoured thee by the title of apostle, Who brought thee up in delights, and taught thee with all loving care, as My own son? Why hast thou forsaken Me, the well of living water, and joined thyself to the servants of the devil? Why hath thy heart gone after avarice, and why hast thou left Me, the highest and Eternal Good, and sold Me for a poor wretched price, although I have within Me the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and I enrich and fill both heaven and earth? Friend, wherefore hast thou come? Turn and look into thine own self, I pray thee, go down a little into thyself, come back to thine own heart, and see the depth to which thou hast fallen; observe what thou hast done. Even now
My grace is open to thee; only come back with sorrow unto Me, and I will receive thee." 88

Who can restrain his tears, when he considereth Christ's unutterable kindness to His betrayer? Who, after this, shall dare to lose hope of God's mercy? O sweetest Jesus, if Thou hast been so faithful, and loving, and kind to the traitor, and the enemy, Thy wicked and unfaithful servant, and hast so laboured to call him back to Thee, and save him, what, therefore, wilt Thou do to Thy dear friends, who seek, and love, and thirst after Thee with their whole life? Of a truth, Thou art no respecter of persons, nor dost Thou desire the death and destruction of the wicked, but rather that they should be turned from their wickedness, and live. For Thou hast embraced all men in Thy Heart, nor dost Thou cast away any man from Thee, save those alone, who by their own free but evil will, and hardness in sin, depart from Thee. Oh! how grieved was our gentle Saviour, that His own disciple should treacher-

ously betray Him with a kiss! Bitterly enough He complaineth of this by the prophet, when He saith: "If Mine enemy had spoken evil against Me, I would indeed have borne it, but that thou, the man of My peace, My friend and disciple, in whom I hoped, and who sattest at meat with Me, shouldst magnify treachery against Me, and sell Me for a vile sum of money, 89 and deliver Me to death! O Judas, wherefore hast thou come? Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"

But now return awhile to thyself, O my soul, and see, I beseech thee, how impatient, how cruel and greedy of vengeance thou art. By a single word thou art moved to anger, to reproachful words, and to avenge thyself. Truly Christ did not disdain to speak to His betrayer, and to call him friend, and to sweetly kiss him. Oh! how many times I pass by my neighbour, thinking it beneath me to speak to him, and by such disdain or contempt provoke him to hatred, and thus I lose his soul when I might have softened him by a friendly look or kind word, and moved him to love.

But Christ addressed also His other enemies with friendly words, and said: "Whom seek ye?" They answered Him: "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them: "I am He." And when He had said this, they went backwards, and fell upon the ground. Here Augustine crieth out: "'I am He,' by this one word, expressive of His hidden Godhead, without a weapon of any kind, He struck down, drove back, laid low so great a multitude that had come out against Him, fierce in wrath, and terrible in arms, for God lay hidden in the flesh. What will He do when He cometh to judge the world, who doeth this when He is about to be judged Himself? 90 What will He do when He shall reign, who could do this when He was about to die?" So far Augustine. After this sign He gave them again power to rise, and raised them, as it were, from death; and a second time He said: "Whom seek ye?" They said unto Him: "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered: "I have told you that I am He." Hearken, O my soul, to this sweet word of thy Saviour. He Who a little before had laid them low upon the ground by one word of His power, by the same word now graciously delivereth Himself over to death, saying: "I have told you that I am He;" as if He would say: "I am ready to fulfil My Father's will, and to offer Myself a living victim to My Father's honour and glory, for the salvation of men. I am ready now, not only to bear all the sins of the world, but also to undergo the penalties which are due to them, and to blot out that old hand-writing of their cruel enemy in My own Blood, and to redeem man from eternal death. Your High Priest spoke truly when he prophesied, that one man must needs die for the people, that the whole nation perish not. I am that Man; I am that innocent Lamb, ready to be offered for the sins of My people. Therefore it is, that now I give Myself into your hands. Often, indeed, have ye desired both to take and to kill Me, but My hour had not yet come. Now that hour is come, and the power 91 of darkness. Glut now your thirst, and your rage against Me. I am He Whom ye seek; I am ready to bear whatever ye can think of to do against Me. Take Me, seize Me, bind Me, lead

Me to death itself; but suffer these to go their way. No power hath been given you over My disciples; only against Me have ye power to rage.

O unutterable love! Oh! of a truth Thou art the good Shepherd. See, how He loved His little flock even to the end, placing Himself between them and the teeth of these ravenous wolves. How willingly He suffered Himself to be mangled, and torn, and killed, that the sheep of His little fold might go unhurt. Then with great fierceness did they take Him, and like mad dogs, fastened their cruel fangs upon this innocent Lamb.

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THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Prayer for perfect Self-denial and Love.

O Most gracious Jesus, I, a vile and wretched sinner, heartily acknowledge and confess myself utterly unworthy of all these benefits, and gifts, and graces, and of all grace and love, which so abundantly and beyond all measure Thou hast bestowed upon me, the least of the worms of earth, and above all, of that love whereby Thou gavest Thyself into the cruel hands of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest suffer a most bitter death for my sins, and mightest shed Thy precious Blood for my redemption. And I beseech Thee, O tender Jesus, mightily to inflame my heart with the same love, that I may utterly deny myself, and count myself for nothing, and may subject myself both to Thee, and, for Thy sake, to all creatures, so that I may correspond in some poor way, at least, with Thy obedience, and resignation, and wonderful humility. And this one other grace grant me also; namely, that my desires and affections may be so inflamed, that I may offer myself wholly to Thee in return, with the same burning love as that with which Thou didst offer Thyself to the Father for me; and that I may offer myself, too, with all my powers, as a living sacrifice, to accomplish Thy most gracious will in all things, both in what I do, and in what I leave undone, without any choice 93
of my own, and to bear whatever may happen to me by the permission of Thy goodness, in whatsoever way or by whomsoever it may come about; and that I may so free and purify the very depths of my being, relying on Thy help, from all selfishness, and sensuality, and impressions of images, and from cleaving thereto; in a word, from everything that can cause a barrier between my soul and Thee, so that naked, and without anything coming between us, I may be united to Thee in will, and love, and intention, and desire; and that I may thoroughly and wholly shake myself off from, and make myself naked of all that is beneath Thee, so that Thou mayest have free space to work in me, and mayest accomplish Thy pleasant work within me without any obstacle; and that I, all free and unencumbered, may embrace Thee in the naked arms of Thy love, and rest for ever in Thee, and Thou in me, O my most sweet, and loving, and gracious Lord and God! Amen.

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THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Jesus is taken and bound.

Come now, and with inward sorrow and weeping eyes let us go and see where we have left our Lord Jesus Christ, namely, in the cruel hands of the savage Jews; our most innocent Lamb in the hateful and rough claws of lions, roaring for their prey. Let us see, I pray, in sorrow and affliction of heart, how shamefully and miserably these unclean dogs have treated the Lord of glory. He, indeed, the meek Lamb of God, spake to them kindly in gentle words, and said: “As against a thief have ye come forth to take Me. I was daily with you, teaching in the temple, and ye took Me not. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.” O ye blind and wicked, what need was there to come in such numbers to take Him, Who of His own free will giveth Himself into your hands? What need was there to search with lanterns and torches for Him Who cometh forth to meet you, and to speak to you? What will your arms profit you, when by one word He hath laid you flat upon the ground? Or why have ye sought by night Him Who was daily with you in the temple? Of a truth, this is the hour of darkness. The children, I say, the children of darkness hate the light; therefore 95
they desire to put it out, that they may remain in their darkness, lest their evil works may be made manifest. But in vain do they labour. As the Scripture saith: His light shall not be put out by night, but it will shine the brighter, and will be lifted up on the candlestick of the Cross, that it may give light to all, who are in the household of Holy Church.

Then all the disciples, leaving their Master alone in the wicked hands of the raging Jews, fled away. Oh! who can think of all the fierceness, and the wickedness, with which those savage wolves treated this our loving Lord, or of the sorrow, and contempt, and shame, that they brought upon Him? Let us for a little while, I implore you, endeavour in our imagination to compass this cross and affliction, in order to stir up our hearts to compassion and devotion. And although all that our Lord here suffered may not appear so plainly as from the Evangelist’s words, yet may we gather and deduce them from those other words, in which he saith: “They did unto Him whatsoever they would.” And who can reckon up all that these mad dogs wrought against this innocent Lamb, if they “did whatever they would?” If they could not glut themselves with His Blood, and with all kind of cruelty against Him, when they had crucified Him, and shed His precious Blood like water, without also crucifying Him with 96
their tongue, and blaspheming and mocking Him, and even opening His Side when He was dead, what must they be thought to have done to Him while He was still alive? If at the end of His Life no kind of savage cruelty could satisfy them, what must we think they did to Him in that first mad rush upon Him, when their rage was at a white heat? Where is the mind that can understand, or the heart that can search out all the cruelty with which they treated our gentle Lord, after having for so long a time sought after Him, and laid in wait to kill Him, and so often threatened Him? With what tyrannical and cruel eagerness did they now

seize on this innocent Lamb, when they had Him in their power, Whose Blood they had so fiercely thirsted after? All the savageness, the malice, the envy, the contempt they had so long conceived and borne in their minds, they now poured out at once upon Him. All the poison, bitterness, and rage, they had so long before laid up in their hearts, and carried about with them, and nourished, they now in one mass vomited out upon Him.

But let us go a little farther, and with great compassion, and hot burning tears, behold how our tender Jesus stood here alone among all those mad and raging hounds, forsaken 97
by all men. Let us imagine, I beseech you, that we ourselves are standing by, and are looking on, while they thus treat so cruelly this meek and gentle Lamb. One teareth out the hair of His Head, another that of His beard. This one layeth hold of His breast, that one of His neck. One striketh Him hard blows in the face, another on the neck, a third upon His Most Sacred Head. Some heap up spittle upon His loving face, and bind His blessed hands with hard cords. There are doctors who say, that they threw an exceeding heavy iron chain around His neck. Who can unfold how many blasphemies, how many reproaches and revilings, how many foul and shameful names our sweet Lord was compelled to hear? Of a truth, they knew not how to glut their malice, or by what shameful torments to rage against Him. For although they carried out against Him all that they could think of in their traitorous and cruel hearts, nor even then were able to glut their bloody thirst—yet far more did they burn, and desire to do, than they actually did. For the more of wickedness and malice their virulent eagerness vomited out, so much the more did they burn to devise all manner of treachery and deceit against Him. And because our Lord had cast them down with their backs upon the ground, so in their exceeding rage and fury, they in their turn threw Him with His back upon the earth, and kneeling upon His breast spat upon His sacred face and adorable mouth; 98
nay, as some doctors think, they so trod upon His breast, and covered His face and mouth with spittle, that by the stopping of His breath He would have died of suffocation, had not the power of His Godhead kept Him alive.

See here, in passing, how almost every step of Christ's Passion was itself a bitter death. Look now, O my soul, with the eyes of thy heart upon thy Lord and Maker, at Whose high Godhead the angels marvel, and see how exceeding low He hath been cast down, and humbled for thy sins. Marvel at, and tremble, and adore this wonder of all wonders! Behold, and with all care consider, how that most high Majesty hath cast Itself down, and, as it were, brought Itself to nothing for the sake of thy measureless vileness. But above all, weigh well that burning love, whereby He willed to do this, for He alone was the cause of His doing so. Contrast, I beg of thee, His highness with thy vileness, and—unless I am mistaken—in the contrast thy powers will fail thee, thy understanding will totter to and fro, thy spirit will become faint, and thy heart for exceeding great wonder will shake with horror. Consider, also, the greatness of thy sin and the fearful weight and gravity of the debt which called for such a payment, and stood in need of such a Redeemer, and asked for so dear a ransom of 99

reconciliation. For with nothing less than the very precious Blood of Christ, and the Death of the Son of God, could it be paid. Observe, too, O my soul, both thine own hardness and dissoluteness, in that thou hast so little fear; and at the same time, be ashamed that thou thinkest nothing at all about sinning, exposing thyself so easily to damnation, when Christ had to redeem thee with such measureless torments, and with such great labour.

After this, behold how those shameful ones trampled upon the Lord of Glory. Hear how He complaineth of this by the prophet, when He saith: “Many young bulls have compassed Me, fat bulls have beset Me round, and many dogs have surrounded Me. Upon My back have sinners built, they have prolonged iniquity. I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people.” Oh! how deeply hath the Majesty of God cast Itself down, in order to lift us up on high! How humbly hath It submitted Itself unto all men, in order to wipe out our pride, and blot out our disobedience. See whether He was not, of a truth, a poor worm, trodden under the feet of the Jews, despised, spat upon, killed? Was ever a thief or malefactor treated so cruelly, so inhumanly, or disfigured so basely, as Jesus
Christ the Son of God, to Whom hath never clung the slightest stain of sin. O sweet Jesus, 100
loving Lord, whither shall I turn my heart for exceeding great trouble, when I see in what anguish and distress Thou wert, when Thou didst lie so miserably among those madmen, who, all of them, like hungry lions, thirsted to mangle and tear Thee in pieces, innocent Lamb that Thou art, and how my sins were the cause of Thy Passion? Who, I ask, can have such a breast of steel, such a heart of ice, as not to be inflamed by love like this? For thereby, when we were about to be burnt up in the fires of hell, Christ took all this upon Himself, and suffered, out of His pure love, the punishment due to our sins for our sakes. That we might be freed from the power of Satan and the chains of death, the King of Glory was taken prisoner, and bound, and led to death; and that He might lead us without punishment into the kingdom of heaven, He underwent all the punishment that we deserved.

Wherefore, O most merciful God, what can we render Thee in return for all this unutterable grace and love? Much have we hitherto marvelled, that Thou hast willed to sink so low as to take our human nature, and to be laid in a manger, but *this* humility, this utter
casting down of Thyself, is above all Thy former works. For now Thou art no more a man, 101
but, indeed, an outcast and a worm. At Thine Incarnation Thou didst lie in the pleasant arms of Thy most tender Mother, but here Thou liest in the hands of the Jews. Then Thou wert adored as God and Man, now Thou art taken as a thief. Then were offered Thee royal gifts, now Thou art smitten, and blasphemed, and despised, and mocked.

Weigh well with thyself, O my soul, what must have been the sorrow of the holy and heavenly spirits, when they saw their Lord and King, Whom they had ever held in such honour and reverence, brought down to such distress, and punishment, and wretchedness, so exceedingly humbled, despised, and shamed. We may, indeed, picture them to ourselves by a holy imagination, as falling down flat upon their faces in the presence of God the

Father, and weeping bitterly and praying for their King. Let us also, therefore, have a fellow-feeling with them, that we may compassionate our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is our sorrow and our wounds, by which He is afflicted and tormented; and with deep groans and sorrowful hearts let us fall down upon our faces before the Father, and say:

"O most gracious Father, look down, I beseech Thee, upon the sore distress of Thine only Begotten One, and the cruel torments whereby He is compassed round about. Oh! how 102
could Thy tender Heart endure to see Thy beloved Son suffer such dreadful agony, and yet give Him no help or succour? O Father, Father, why hast Thou forsaken Him? Why were Thy fatherly bowels moved not with compassion towards Thy beloved Son? Why hadst Thou no pity on the tears of the angels, so as to suffer them to avenge the wrongs of their Master and their King? What love hath overcome Thee, O Father of Mercies? What is man, that Thou so lovest him? Thou hast pity upon sinful men, and forsakest Thine only Son. That men might be exalted in heaven, it is for this that Thy Son is so shamefully humbled upon earth. That the guilty and wicked sinner might be freed from death, this is why Thy only holy One, Who knew no sin, is led to a miserable death! O most loving Father, what is this marvellous work which Thou hast willed to do, that Thou shouldst lay all our sins upon Thine only One, and avenge them in Him, although He ever thirsted after Thy honour, and did Thy will, and performed whatever was grateful and pleasing in Thy sight? Yes, Thou hast horribly smitten this Thy beloved Son for our sins, and delivered Him wholly into the hands of the cruel Jews. What shall I give Thee in return, O Father of heaven, for all this utterly unfathomable and incomparable love, for all the faithfulness, and mercy, and loving- 103
kindness, which Thou hast shown to me, so worthless, and vile, and ungrateful, and dissolute a sinner? What gratitude, what praise and honour shall I repay Thee for all this? Oh! how can I ever give Thee even the least thing in return for love so far above all understanding?"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A very humble Confession of Sins, and a Prayer to the Father for Forgiveness.

O Father Almighty, tender and merciful, I, a wretched and vile sinner, with as much lowliness as I can, and with full trust in the immensity of Thy goodness, cast myself down at Thy Feet, and confess with inward sorrow of heart all my great and grievous sins, whereby I have offended Thee, my gracious Father, even to this very hour; and that I have not feared to commit those accursed crimes which Thy only and beloved Son so cruelly atoned for, and so bitterly expiated. 104 I confess also to Thee, O most gracious Father, my manifold and great ingratitude, that even to this hour I have been ungrateful both to Thee, and to Thy Son, for all the love, and mercy, and faithfulness which Thou hast shown me; inasmuch as now, for so many years, in the midst of malice and sinfulness, Thou hast in Thy long-suffering spared me, and hast gently borne with all the wrong and contempt I have brought upon Thee by my disobedience and evil will; nay, even waited for my repentance with such infinite loving-kindness, in order that at some time or other Thou mightest get possession of my heart, and make Thy dwelling-place therein, and pour out upon it Thy love. And oh! how often, O Lord my God, hast Thou knocked at the door of my heart by Thine inspirations, and soothed me with Thy good gifts, and drawn me on by Thy consolations, and forced me on by the afflictions Thou hast sent me; and yet Thou last suffered Thyself to be driven back, for always have I turned my back on Thee. But even this Thou hast borne in mercy. Oh! how justly mightest Thou have cast me down into the depths of hell, yet hast Thou graciously spared me. Of a truth, it is wonderful, O sweet Father, that my heart breaketh not for exceeding great contrition, when I think of these things. Even hell itself hath not punishments many and cruel enough for all my wickedness and sin. 105 I am not worthy that I should be called Thy creature, or that the earth should bear me up, or provide me with nourishment. Marvellous it is, O Lord, that Thy other creatures and all the elements have not taken vengeance together on the wrongs and contempt I have brought upon Thee by my manifold iniquity.

But now, O most faithful Father, have mercy upon me, I beseech Thee, and turn to me, a wretched and lonely sinner, the eyes of Thy divine grace and tenderness. Open to me the bowels of Thy lovingkindness; take me back again into Thy grace; pardon me for having so long delayed to turn to Thee. Throw open to me Thy fatherly bosom, and pour upon me the nourishment and comfort of Thy grace. I beseech Thee, O Lord God, work speedily in me, that for the sake of which hitherto Thou hast spared me, and for which from everlasting Thou hast foreordained me. And woe to me, unhappy sinner, because I have forsaken so loving, so tender a Father, Who hath never shown me anything but love, and kindness, and grace, and faithfulness, and because I have refused Thee my heart, which Thou, O God, hast decreed to be Thy temple, Thy dwelling-place, and Thy delight, and have made it foul with 106

many stains, for indeed it hath been a vessel of iniquity, and the cave of unclean spirits. Openly I confess to Thee, O Lord, that of all whom the world holdeth, I am the most sinful. Nevertheless, in the immensity of Thy goodness I place my trust; for if my sins are above number, so also is Thy mercy.

O most loving Father, if Thou wilt, Thou canst indeed make me clean. Heal my soul, for I confess to Thee that I have sinned. Remember, O kind Lord, that comforting word of Thine, which Thou spakest by one of Thy prophets: “Thou hast committed fornication with many lovers; yet turn again to Me, and I will take thee back.” Of a truth, Father of Mercies, I trust much in this most sweet word, and with my whole heart I turn to Thee, as if Thou hadst spoken it to none but to me alone, and as if by that word Thou hadst meant to call me alone. For I, even I, unclean and unfaithful soul that I am, am that prodigal and unprofitable son, who miserably have gone far away from Thee, the Father of lights, from Whom flow all good things, and as a wandering sheep, have strayed far from Thee, and squandered and lost all those bountiful gifts which Thou hadst given me in such profusion. I have left Thee, the fountain of living water, and have dug for myself cisterns holding no water, by seeking outward consolation, for all temporal and perishable delight vanisheth away like 107
smoke. I have left Thee, too, the Bread of Life, and I have fed myself with the husks of swine, by following my sensual appetites, and indulging my passions, like the beasts. I have left Thee, the Highest, and perfect, and Eternal Good, and I have let myself float down upon the stream of earthly pleasure that passeth rapidly away. Wherefore I have become naked, and poor, and wretched, and unclean, and, like the beast of the stall, I have become rotten in my own dung and filth. But I pray Thee, O Father, remember not the contempt and the wrong Thou hast received at my hands. For I have thought of my ways, and my evil life, and with my whole strength I have turned my feet towards Thy testimonies and Thy commandments. Yea! and in the bitterness of my soul I have counted all my years as evil and lost, and I have determined with myself to do Thy will, and to persevere in Thy faithful service. Lord! what wilt Thou have me to do? For I am ready not only to bear the easy yoke of Thy commandments, but also for Thy love to keep to hard paths, and to enter upon the strait and narrow way of the cross, and to take the cross upon my shoulders, and to follow Thine only and beloved Son. And now, O Father of heaven, I offer myself wholly to Thee, with all love, and with all my powers, as a living sacrifice; and whatsoever Thou wishest to do with me in 108
time and eternity, I am ready to do or not to do, and to suffer whatever Thy goodness shall desire to come upon me. Take thorough vengeance upon me, O Lord, for all the wrong I have done Thee, for humbly do I bow myself beneath the scourge of Thy fatherly mercy. Bind, I beseech Thee, my hands and my feet, lest in aught I may rebel against Thee; for although the flesh indeed is weak, and without will, yet the spirit is altogether ready. I know, yes, of a truth, I know that so many adversities could not have come upon me, unless I had deserved greater and more for mine iniquities. Wherefore I ask for nothing but Thy grace

from the depths of my heart, and that mercy may temper justice. But what shall I render unto Thee, O most gracious Father, for all that Thou hast done for me? Teach me by what works, by what service, by what offerings I ought to appease and reconcile Thee. Thou hast commanded us not to appear before Thee empty-handed. But what shall I offer Thee, who have nothing of my own. All this is why I humbly knock at the door of Thy rich Son, and beg an alms out of the infinite never-failing treasury of His most sacred Passion; and this I will offer Thee. Nay, I offer Thee this same only Son of Thine, in union with that love with 109
which Thou didst offer Him to me, and didst send Him from Thy fatherly Heart into this world, that He might take our human nature, and undergo a most bitter death; and with Him I offer Thee all His merits, that is to say, of His Incarnation, Passion and Death; but more especially that shameful affliction and torment which He suffered when He was taken prisoner. Moreover I offer Thee His willing obedience, His unutterable lowliness and patience, and above all that burning love of His, with which He went forth to meet His enemies, and cheerfully, as if they had been His friends, gave Himself into their hands. In like manner, all the cruel chains, and blows, and buffets, and tramplings under foot, the contempt, the spittle, the mockery, the blasphemies, and whatever He suffered when He was taken, all this with overflowing heart and meek gratitude, I offer as a worthy sacrifice to Thy supreme glory, for all my sins and negligences. Accept, I beseech Thee, O most gracious Father, the merits of Thine only-begotten Son for all my iniquities. For whatever sin I have committed against Thy justice, all this Thy beloved and only Son hath paid for, and blotted out, and expiated by His Passion, and for all my defects He hath laden Himself with, and supplied for them. And what can be the sin so great, for which such suffering cannot implore pardon? 110
What can be the stain so foul, that Christ's warm blood cannot wash away? What malice can there be in man so deep-rooted and inveterate, which such burning love cannot melt away, and utterly burn out? Of a truth His Passion is stronger than our sins, and the riches of His merits are measureless and infinite, so as to outweigh all sins and negligences. Wherefore from these deep streams I draw whatever I see is wanting to me.

I offer Thee, then, His most innocent Death, and whatever He wrought in His human nature, together with all the merits of all the saints, and all the acts of virtue, and all the praise which shall be shown forth in Thy sight until the last judgment day, and throughout endless ages of ages. All this with as full a heart as I can, I offer Thee, as if they were all my own. Lastly, I offer Thee this oblation to Thine eternal glory for my own sins, and for those of all the living and the dead, for whom I am bound to pour forth prayers, and as Thou, O God, wishest to be entreated for them, and that Thou mayest be praised and blessed thereby for all eternity, and that thanksgiving may be made to Thee by all Thy creatures.

111

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Jesus is forsaken by His Disciples.

When our Saviour, as hath been said, was so cruelly bound, and led away by those mad dogs in so miserable a plight, His disciples, terrified by exceeding great fear, fled away from their beloved Master, and left Him alone. But oh! what must have been their sorrow, when returning to themselves, and looking into the depths of their own hearts, they thought with themselves Whom they had forsaken, and from Whom they had separated themselves; and how faithlessly they had deserted their loving Master and most faithful Lord in the moment of His greatest need. Oh! how those fiery and piercing words, which Christ had spoken to them in warning, both at the supper and on the way, now glowed within them, and burnt into their hearts like live coals. For although they had torn themselves away from the fire, yet as men who have just come from the fire, they were still glowing with heat, and the sparks of fire were still bright within their breasts. And although Christ in His provident
wisdom, had, for a little while, departed from them in the body, yet He had left behind Him 112
in their hearts His inward foot-prints, and the signs of His Visitation; that is to say, tears, and groans, and compunction of heart. He Who had once saved His people Israel in the wilderness, leading them by night by a pillar of fire, lest they should wander and fall into the hands of their enemies, He it is, the same Lord, Who now guarded and led His holy apostles by the support of His fiery love, lest in that dark night they should utterly lose their way, and fall under the power of Satan. For although He had been taken away from their bodily eyes, yet had He left His Spirit in their hearts, by which also they cried out: "Abide with us, Lord, for it is toward evening." Oh! in what distress and anguish they went along, shedding many and bitter tears! Oh! how often with weeping eyes and many groans did they look up unto heaven! In what misery did they go along the way, weeping and crying aloud, complaining of their grief, and clasping their hands, as orphans without a father, desolate as sheep without a shepherd! How forcibly they smote their breasts, and said: "O gracious Master, O sweet Father, O gentle Lord, Who hast nourished us for so many days in delights, and hast guarded us as Thine own sons with loving care, and governed us with
all zeal, and taught us with all wisdom, and loved us with all faithfulness, as if we had been 113
Thine own Heart! How is it that we have gone away from Thee so basely? Whither shall we now fly? Who henceforward will defend us? Ah! ravening wolves will now attack Thy sheep. Why have we forsaken Thee? Why did we not cling to Thee? Why did we not stand by Thee, as we promised, even unto death? Better far would it have been for us to die with Thee, than to live without Thee. Oh! how often meanwhile did they cast back their eyes on their Master, Whom they saw led away so cruelly to death! How often did they stop doubting in their minds, whether or not to go back to Him! How were love and fear fighting within them for

the mastery! But all this was by God's permission, God so ordering, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

As for the rest, our sweet Jesus being now in the hands of His enemies, turned not His loving-kindness away even from these wicked ones, for He healed the ear of one of the Jewish servants, that had been cut off. Yet could not all this goodness and power, shown to these traitors, soften their hearts of stone.

114

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Jesus is led to Annas.

From this they now led Him away cruelly bound to Annas. And here who is able to think of all the annoyances, and injuries, and cruelty, and contempt with which they treated Him on the way; how often they struck Him, and vomited out blasphemies against Him, and pulled His sacred beard, and kicked Him, and spat their hateful spittle in that fair face of His, on which the angels desire to look; and how at last they hastened to lead Him as quickly as they could to the chief priest, and after this to deliver Him over to death. No one can think of all they did to Him, for far more than all this they did, since, as it is written, they did with Him what they would.

See now, O my soul, how miserably thy Lord and Maker is beset and led off by those wicked and lustful wretches, just as if He had been a thief, or malefactor condemned to death. And yet, during all this persecution He remained patient towards men, most grateful towards His Father. Think, I ask of Thee, what sort of night, so full of trouble was it, must this have been to Him? O Jesus, King of glory, Who governest the whole world by a word, for no one can resist Thy power, how lowly, and poor, and weak, and despised, hast Thou 115
willed to become for my sake! Where now are the thousand times ten thousand of those who fall upon their faces before Thee, and adore, and bless, and praise Thee, saying without ceasing; "Holy, Holy, Holy!" Of a truth, O loving Jesus, this is the hour of darkness, the time of sorrow, the night of bitterness. And Thou didst enter into this sad and horrible night of Thine own free will for my sake. Thus, then, as we have seen, they led Him bound and disfigured to Annas.

Let us now see, but with exceeding compassion, how humbly the Lord of power stood there chained and covered with spittle, His eyes cast down, His face suffused with virginal shame, waiting with friendly look to be judged by a vile and puffed up sinner, although no guile had ever been found in His mouth, nor any injustice in His deeds; nay, to Whom, because He was full of grace and truth, all power and all judgment hath been delegated by the Father. And see! how the blood-thirsty high-priest treacherously questioned Him concerning His disciples and His doctrine, in order that from His words he might lay hold of some occasion to condemn Him. But Christ, the Wisdom of God, understanding the high-priest's deceit, was silent as to His disciples for this time, because at this particular time He could 116
not greatly praise them. But with regard to His doctrine, He answered with prudence and wisdom: "I spake openly before the world, I was daily teaching in the synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews meet. Why askest thou Me? Ask them, who heard what I said; ask thy servants whom thou hast sent to take Me; behold! these know what I have said." Of a truth, He who speaks thus is the Eternal Truth, Whose words are so just and true, that even His enemies bear witness to them. And when He had said this, one of the servants

standing by, a wicked man and of bold front, gave Jesus a horrible blow, saying: “Answerest Thou thus the high-priest?” Meekly did this gentle Lamb receive that blow, nor did His face contract with wrinkles, nor burn with anger, nor did He loosen His tongue to make reproach, nor did He stretch forth His hand to avenge Himself, but He meekly answered, and said: “If I have spoken ill, bear witness to the ill, but if well, why smitest thou Me?” O Jesus, gentlest Lamb, who can call to mind without tears Thy exceeding loving-kindness, and patience, in that Thou sufferest that fair face of Thine, on which the angels desire to look, to be so cruelly smitten by a vile wretch? 117 And thou, O my soul, how proud, how impatient, and severe, and rude and greedy of revenge thou art, thou who by one word art disturbed and offended, nor ever thinkest of the mighty wrong the Son of God underwent for thy sake. Let His Passion be the mirror of thy life, follow His blessed footsteps and His conversation, learn of Him, how He is meek and humble of heart. Offer Him at least one little drop of sorrow in return for the large and bitter chalice which He drank to the very dregs for thy salvation; show Him some little compassion for all His labour and sorrow; give Him at least patience for patience, suffer contempt for contempt; forgive thy neighbour, even as God daily forgiveth thy many wanderings, although often thou offendest Him, and so forgiveth, as not the less to protect thee, and show thee His friendship and loving-kindness. Contemplate the whole of Christ’s Passion, even to His last breath, and never once wilt thou find Him to have been moved in any way against His enemies, although they afflicted Him so sorely, or ever to have shown forth the least contempt for them either in word, or look, or deed. Nay, rather, thou wilt find that He showed them all lovingkindness and sweetness, so that, if possible, He might soften and turn their hearts. For so loving, so sweet is our Lord, that He knoweth not how to show His enemies anything but love and friendship. 118 He hath a kiss for him who betrayed Him, and sought to take Him, He healeth the ear of one of the high-priest’s servants, when it had been cut off; He prayeth for them who crucified Him; nay, His Heart was wounded with greater agony by their sins and hardness of heart, than by the outward pain which He bore in His body.

We, therefore, if we wish to please Christ, ought to cast away far from us all bitterness, and rancour, and the clouds of passion, and to rejoice when any adversity crosseth our path. For that sweet Bridegroom came to look for a sweet bride, who might be free from guile, and like Himself in condition. Hence, in the Canticle of Canticles He calleth His bride a dove.

Moreover, Peter also followed his Lord, but when He was charged with being of the number of Christ’s disciples, he denied Him thrice. Thus Christ, moved by mercy, turned the eyes of His grace upon Peter, who, returning to himself, began to think that this had been foretold him by Christ; how, namely, before the cock crowed, he should deny Him

thrice. Thus touched with inward sorrow of heart, he went out from the company of sinners, by whom he had been drawn on to his fall and sin, and wept bitterly. Let us also see here, how great was the sorrow which pierced Christ's loving Heart, when He saw the head and the most earnest of His disciples thus miserably overcome, and how, even as powerful 119
Samson of old had lost all his strength through a woman, so now the prince of the apostles, who by a word had been wont to cast out devils, had denied his Master, out of fear of one word from a woman-servant's mouth. Oh! how all His bowels were moved with compassion and mercy at the weakness and fall of His disciple, and even as some kind father mourneth for the death of his only child, so did Christ weep for the inward death of His disciple and member, whose spiritual death-wound touched Him with no less sorrow, than if He had received it Himself. Oh! how quickly He snatched him out of Satan's power, into which he had fallen, and raised him up again by His preventing grace! How quickly did He look upon him with the eyes of His grace, and permitted the rays of divine light to shine into the dark depths of his soul! Hence it happened, that Peter at once returned to himself, and betaking himself into the depths of his own heart, acknowledged his fault, and wept bitterly; and straightway at the first touch of grace, turning away from the children of darkness, turned himself to the light that went before him. For although by God's permission he had fallen into weakness, yet had he been resigned to God, and had utterly denied his own will, and 120
given himself wholly to God; and lately again he had chosen him and embraced him in His Heart, so that in desire and affection nothing could ever separate him from Him. And although afterwards he failed in deed, yet that resolution, that desire was good. For he had said: "Lord, even if all should be scandalized in Thee, and shall forsake Thee, yet not I. For I am ready to go with Thee to prison and to death." No doubt, love and burning desire had raised his courage above its strength, and had so lifted up his heart, that he forgot his own frailty. But temptation changed all this, so that now he humbly cast himself down within himself, and esteemed himself as nothing worth; who so lately had boastingly lifted himself above himself, and being left to himself, learnt also what in that first fervour he had been unable to recognize. For he had offered himself to God, and suffered God to work in him, but that lofty structure which God sought to build up in him, could not be built, except first the weakness of the first foundation were disclosed, and a new foundation deep and low were laid. For straightway as soon as Christ looked upon him, and he received the light of grace in his heart, he followed that light, and accustomed himself to the touch and inspiration of His Spirit, doing what he was admonished by the Spirit to do; namely, to turn away from 121
creatures, and to turn to the light which he felt within him; and by this he was led to the knowledge of himself, and so he wept bitterly, For when he had trusted to himself, and boasted of himself boldly above measure, and the weakness of nature, our Lord left him to himself, that he might recognize his own weakness and powerlessness; and thus at once he fell. For however much we trust in fervour of spirit, to the same extent ought we to fear the

frailty of nature. Of a truth, S. Peter, as long as he was with his Lord, feared neither death, nor enemies, nor weapons of war, for boldly had he thrown himself upon the enemy, striking at them with his sword. But when his Lord turned away His face from him, he was overthrown and overcome by one woman's word. No doubt this is what David meant when he said: "Thou didst turn Thy face from me, and I was troubled."

O measureless goodness of God, how tenderly did our loving Lord undergo the contempt and shame which He suffered on account of His disciple, in order that thereby the same disciple might learn to know and humble himself? For already had our Lord decreed that he was to be the foundation of the Church, and therefore He permitted him to fall into the
lowest depth of his nature, where he clearly discovered his own frailty and utter powerless- 122
ness; and where he learnt not to boast rashly of himself, but humbly to trust in the help of God, as it is written "Be not high-minded, but fear." For all this, because Christ had fore-ordained Peter to be to the house of Israel, a wall and tower that can never be taken, it was altogether necessary, that his foundation should be laid exceeding deep in the virtue of humility, which is itself the foundation of the whole spiritual structure and of every good. It was necessary, too, that the head should feel sick and weak, in order to feel pity upon the weakness of the other members, and to forgive those who sin not seven times, but seventy times seven, and to learn by what he himself suffered, how to have compassion upon all who desire to turn from their sins, and to obtain for them the grace which he himself had received from Christ. And because Peter had resigned himself wholly into God's hands, and his heart and intention were right and true before God, therefore it was that this fall was not unto damnation, but rather a healing medicine, and was a step forward towards God; so that he who had rashly and without caution turned to himself, being now fallen and wounded, might be compelled to forsake himself, and to turn to God. And this is why the
apostle saith: "To them that love God all things work together for good," both adversity and 123
prosperity, riches and poverty, gain and loss. For they who have renounced their own selves, and suffered themselves to be led by God, to such there can happen nothing ill. For when by God's permission, any infirmity cometh upon them, it is for them the cause and matter of humiliation, and contempt, and of lowly thoughts about themselves, and of turning to God, and of loving God, and of cleaving unto God, and of serving Him more faithfully, and of observing themselves more carefully, and of more diligently watching their own salvation. And whatever from their own defect they lose in mounting up to God, and in working for Him, that they gain once more in coming down into themselves, and in resignation. For the deeper we go down in the knowledge of ourselves, so much the higher do we rise in the knowledge of God, in which consisteth our chief beatitude; just as the deeper the wall below,

the higher it is from above. So, too, the more we cast ourselves down, the higher will God exalt us, and the viler we believe ourselves to be, the more shall we magnify God.

Nor can a man worthily honour God, unless he be truly humble; nor is any service pleasing unto God, unless it proceed from a humble heart; nor is any man so pleasing unto
God, as he who is utterly humble. For such men have so lowered themselves, and made 124
themselves of no account in their own eyes, that God, neither by Himself nor by all His gifts, can cause them to be proud of themselves. For the more they are enlightened, and the more gifts and graces they receive from God, so much the more clearly on this very account do they recognise their own vileness, and the more unworthy do they feel themselves to receive any of God's gifts; and for this reason they marvel that God should vouchsafe to work anything through them. From this then arises in them so great a love, reverence, zeal, and delight towards God, that they know not how in any way to repay His exceeding love and graciousness, or how to do enough for Him. They know, too, that both they themselves, and whatever they are able to do, suffice not for this. Hence it is, after all, but a little thing for them, compared with what they desire to do, that they have given themselves wholly unto Him, Who had first given Himself wholly for them, since they are not ignorant, how all that they can themselves give is far above what they can give to Him, when compared with all they have received from Him. Nor do they know how enough to praise Him, or to give Him
thanks, or to exalt and worthily honour Him, or how enough to despise and to think nothing 125
of their own selves. Whatever they do, they are eager to do more; at all times they have equally the same thirst after His honour, the same alacrity in doing His will, for their love of God is always asking of them something more. They praise God, indeed, but they fall short in praising Him; and because they fall short in good, they confess that they do wrong even in that which they do well. Hence they blame and despise themselves; yet here again they come short, and so are made nothing in their own eyes. Now in this mounting up to God by praise and reverence, and in this going down into their own selves, they are set on fire with love, and the red marriage garment, the scarlet and purple robe, twice dyed, is woven. This is that ladder, which Jacob saw reaching up into heaven, and the angels ascending and descending thereon; and of a truth, as many as have found this way of ascent and descent, rightly and deservedly may be called angels. For, indeed, by means of that mighty wonder which is stirred up within them by the knowledge of God, and by means of that burning love which springeth from this knowledge, they have so mounted up on high to God in their
affections, as to pass beyond and above, and to forsake all earthly and perishable things, and 126
to have their conversation in heaven, now contemplating God with this illuminated understanding, so far as God Himself wisheth to be known by them, and as is expedient for them; and now again by the light which they receive from God's shining rays, sinking down into the depths of their own being, and letting themselves fall into their own vileness, where they utterly despise themselves, and hold themselves as less than nothing. And when again they

feel the exile of this world, and the frailty of their nature, and the wants of the body, they groan and cry aloud: “Alas! am I still here in my misery?” And they say with the apostle: “Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” O Lord, take my soul out of its prison. I desire to be dissolved and to be for ever with Thee. Even as the hart desireth the fountains of living water, so doth my soul thirst after Thee, O God. Oh! when shall I see with mine eyes Him Whom I confess with my mouth, Whom I believe in my heart, Whom I thirst after in my affections? When shall I see Thee face to face, Whom now I am permitted to see only in a glass, in a dark way. Wherefore let my tears and my groans be my bread day and night, and my consolation; and let my soul look down upon all earthly comforts, until the day come when it shall be said to me: “Behold here is thy God!” 127
Oh! they who ceaselessly fly up on high upon wings like these, even as the chaste and mourning dove, or who mount up by the ladder aforesaid, seeking after the things their soul loveth, passing step by step from virtue to virtue even unto God. Oh! surely surely shall they with Jacob see God leaning over the top of the ladder, as He stretcheth, out His arms to rescue His bride, and saith: “Come, My bride, My dove, enter into the joy of My delights, which thou hast sought after with toil and groans.”

Men like these can with confidence mount up to God, because they have laid their foundations deep down in humility, and are led by the Spirit of God, so that they cannot fall as long as the hand of God upholdeth them. Oh! happy and blessed they, who walk not after the impulse of nature, or their own judgment, but according to God’s leading, and suffer themselves obediently to be guided by God’s Spirit, and to follow whithersoever He may have gone before. And now, O my soul, how is it that in thine inmost depths thou art so busied about other things, and so distracted and unquiet, that thou art unable to notice God’s secret inspirations? How rebellious also art thou, and given up to thine own will, so that very often thou causest delay to God’s Spirit, and placest obstacles in the way of His 128
sweet workings? S. Peter, at one look from God, was so thoroughly converted to Him, that exceedingly quickly he turned himself from every disturbing and distracting influence to God, so that he was taken back into God’s grace, and his sins were forgiven him, and he was established in love.

O most gracious Jesus, how happy are they on whom Thine eyes thus fall, whom Thou thus enlightenest with the rays of Thy divine light, so that they are enabled both to search into the depths of their own soul, and to acknowledge their own sin! How quickly are they converted! How quickly are their cold, hard hearts softened, inflamed, melted with love, and dissolved in tears, so that they who before could not keep from sin, now cry out in the conversion of their hearts: “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Of a truth it was no marvel that Peter should weep bitterly; but it is indeed a marvel, and a greater marvel, that his heart

should not have utterly burst asunder for distress and fear, when his dear Lord caused him to look into the depths of his own soul, and to see his own sins, and to perceive all the contempt and wrong he had brought upon his beloved Master. Oh! that a man could only once 129
thus look into the depths of his own soul!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Prayer that we may follow Christ.

O Sweetest Jesus, Who wert forsaken by Thine own disciples, taken prisoner by Thy chosen people, betrayed, sold, and given up by Thy own apostle, led, shamefully bound, before Annas the high-priest, denied thrice by Thy chief apostle, and cruelly struck upon the face by a vile servant; I beseech Thee, O my God, by Thy most sacred Passion, and by all the contempt which Thou didst freely undergo for my sins, to forgive me whatever I have done wrong against Thy law, and the right of Thy commandments; and henceforward to direct all my life according to Thy most gracious will. Grant me also the grace to follow Thine example, by truly loving my enemies, and by doing good to them who do me wrong and trouble me. O my only comfort, so soften my heart, I beseech Thee, and make it so warm and pliable by the fire of Thy love, that Thou mayest be able, according to Thy will and desire, to beat it down with repeated blows of the hammer of affliction, and to work it 130 into a vessel of love for the tenderness and delight of Thine own Heart, and that I may never faint away through frailty under these blows, but that at each blow I may send forth fiery sparks of patience and resignation! O Jesus, mirror of virtue, form of perfection, way of life, lantern to my feet, grant that I may faithfully keep to the footsteps of Thy patience, lowliness, obedience, and love, and so that my life may be in harmony with Thine, so far as this is possible for mortal man.

O Thou true Lover of men, Who desirest that no man should perish, but that all should turn to the knowledge of the truth, and be enlightened thereby, look upon me, I beseech Thee, from the bottom of my heart, with the eyes of Thy mercy, as Thou didst look on Peter, and Magdalen, and Matthew, and those many others, whom Thou didst draw forcibly away from the path of iniquity, to Thy singular love, that the rays of Thy divine light may shine in the dark depths of my soul, and that I may thus clearly know my measureless vileness, and wickedness, and my own nothing, and utterly annihilate myself in mine own eyes, and profoundly humble myself before Thee and all men, so far as it is possible for me, and pleasing and agreeable to Thee. 131 O heat of the Love of God, that burnest so fervently, that no water can quench Thee, for Thou ever brightly glowest, nor can Thy flame ever fail, and Thou consumest and transformest all things into Thyself, even as the fire which is seen by the eye transformeth iron and wood; burn, I beseech Thee, all that Thou canst lay hold upon without obstacle, and melt my hard and stiffened heart by the heat of Thy love, that I may embrace Thee with the closest love, and that I may be all consumed in my poor, frail, and corrupt nature, given up, as it is, to the senses which, indeed, I did not make and form for myself, but which I have rather unmade, and deformed, and that I may become nothing, and by thy marvellous transformation may put on and wear a new form and likeness according to Thy likeness. And even as Thou, O everlasting Son of God, by the fellow-working of

the Holy Ghost, wert made the Son of Man, and taking upon Thee what Thou wert not, didst yet remain what Thou wert, so in like manner make me to be born again into the number of Thy elect children, by the laying aside of the old, and carnal, and sensual man, and by the taking on of the new, and deiform man, created according to Thine image. O Key of David! that openest, and no man shutteth, that shuttest, and no man openeth, shut up, I beseech Thee, all the windows of my senses, through which entrance may be given to 132 death, or the devil, or any wicked thing, into my soul, which is Thy house, and which holiness becometh. And because it hath pleased Thee to make Thy temple within us, keep Thy dwelling-place spotless, that it may be Thy everlasting house of prayer, and that it may please Thee to dwell therein for ever. Open only therein the eastern gate which Ezechiel saw, that is the highest part of my soul, of which Thou didst give command to Thy prophet, that no man should enter through it, for Thou, the King of Israel, wouldst keep its entrance for Thyself alone. Keep, then, for Thyself alone, this entrance, that it may lie wide open at the rising of Thy grace, and that when Thou, the Sun of Justice, beginnest to dawn over my darkened soul, straightway I may be able to receive in me the rays of Thy light, and that so, in the words of Holy Writ, my evening and Thy bright morning may be one day; and also that I who, times beyond number, have, with Peter, by my wicked works, denied Thee by night, may confess to Thee by day.

Open up to me, also, O my God, the vein of tears, suffer mine eyes to grow weak and dim with weeping at the thought of many sins and of the wrongs I have done Thee, O Lord 133 my God, by my dissolute and negligent life. Of a truth, most sweet God, Thou hast loved us beyond our poor understanding, and therefore Thou askest for a return of love from us, and I long to satisfy this demand of Thine, and desire to love Thee in return, O my God, with my whole heart, and strength, and thought. But, O most gracious God, I have fallen down to my own self upon the earth, my heart is full of stains, my spirit full of sluggishness, my understanding full of darkness, my thoughts full of distractions, and I have utterly lost the mastery over myself; for my own household fighteth against me, nor is there anyone subject unto me. Yea! with groans I complain to Thee, that the very wife, whom Thou hast given to be my helpmate, whom I have more than enough cherished in my bosom, I mean my own flesh, persecuteth me, and, like Eve, daily desireth my destruction, by vexing me, and offering me the forbidden food of pleasure. Wherefore I fly to Thee, O God, my protector. Enlighten, I beseech Thee, my inward eyes, that I consent not to sin; strengthen all my powers, that I may overcome mine enemies, and subject all my senses and all my members to my spirit, in order to serve Thee alone. Cleanse Thou my heart, inflame my spirit, enlighten my understanding, collect my thoughts, unite all my powers, and bind them together with the chain of Thy love, and the fetters of Thy fear, so that never more I may be estranged 134 from Thee, but that ever subject and united to Thee, I may cleave unto Thee and faint not,

but rather fear, and love, and thank, and praise, and bless Thee now and for evermore. Amen.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Jesus is led to Caiaphas.

After this Annas sent Jesus bound to Caiaphas, who was the high-priest of that year. Here the chief priests and scribes and elders of the Jews had met together, for eagerly they thirsted to deliver Christ to death, and to shed His innocent Blood; and when they saw Him, they rejoiced like a lion that has caught its prey, and is ready to devour it. Now this was the second procession of our Saviour. Follow now thy Bridegroom, O my soul! Who, in order to espouse thee underwent all this labour and torment. Nor will He remain with thee for long. See, He is already given over into the hands of His cruel enemies, and of the Jews who are thirsting for His Blood, and who will not give over, until they shall fasten Him to the gibbet of the Cross. 135

Gaze now upon that fair face of His, and press it to thy heart, for yet a little while and there will be no more fairness in it at all, nor any beauty. Observe, I beg of thee, this sad procession, wherein these cruel dogs lead along the gentle Lamb, and this, we may firmly believe, they have done, as children of the devil, full of envy and madness, even as their father Satan hath suggested to them and persuaded them. And because they had remained quiet for a little while, in the house of Annas, and had recovered their strength, now they began anew to vex our Lord on the way, and to mock Him, and to spit upon Him, and to pull His venerable beard and hair, and to throw Him down, and to trample on Him with their feet, and then, when He had fallen upon the ground, to drag Him along; in a word, to heap upon Him all the reproaches, and mockery, and annoyance, and injury that they could think of. Let us here consider in our hearts the agony which our sweet Jesus suffered in His Heart, how weary was His Body, how sick and ill were all His members from this grievous cruelty, and the exceeding great haste with which the Jews hurried Him along. For in all this agony and distress not even a moment's space was given Him, in which He could draw even one breath; yet was He ever the same innocent, patient Lamb, Who gave Himself wholly 136 up to their fury. Whose is the heart that can keep from tears, when he seeth love, and lowliness, and patience such as this? Who would not be touched with compassion, and groan from his inmost heart, and proclaim himself guilty before high heaven, when he seeth that he is himself the cause of such exceeding cruel suffering to his Lord? Thus then they led our Lord Jesus with all cruelty to Caiaphas, at whose house the chief priests and elders of the Jews had hurried together, as children of the devil, at their father's bidding. And because they had met in Satan's name to shed Christ's innocent Blood, therefore was that malignant one in the midst of them, inwardly spurring them on to all manner of cruelty and malice. See now, O my soul, how humbly the King of Glory stood there, His hands bound, His eyes cast down, His face pitiable and disfigured from the spittle and the blows, yet full of chaste shame, and loving thirst, and longing to drink the bitter chalice, and to

accomplish His Father's will; and how those raging and cruel dogs gnashed at Him with their teeth, and glared at Him exceeding fierce looks. This is that of which our Lord complained by the mouth of His prophet, when He said: "They have taken thought together against Me, and looked on Me with fearful eyes; they have gaped upon Me with their mouths 137
like a ravening and a roaring lion; they have gnashed upon Me with their teeth; they have sharpened their tongues like serpents, that they might vomit upon Me this poison." Ah! who can see without sorrow of heart this innocent and weak Lamb standing alone among so many savage wolves, and think that He Who is the Son of God, and Lord of lords, to Whom belongeth all judgment, is waiting for sentence of death to be passed upon Him by the vilest of His creatures, and wicked sinners? Oh! how their savage breasts burned with rage! How their souls overflowed with hatred, and their mouths with cursing and malice! How did envy darken their reason, spread thick clouds over their understanding, extinguish truth, keep down the judgment of their conscience, and all thoughts of religion! Oh! all the plots, and snares, and false-witness contrived against this guiltless Lamb, and drunk in by their cruel and poisoned thirst, in order that they might deliver over the Just One unto death! Yet our sweet Lord opened not His mouth, but gently and meekly bore for His Father's honour all those wicked and foul lies, and blasphemies, and falsehoods, which they heaped upon Him. No excuse would He give, for He had taken upon Him all the sins of the world; 138
and because it was His will to be crucified with the unjust, as an unjust man, it was also His will to be judged. Not even a word did He answer to all these false accusations, because out of His measureless love He thirsted with a burning thirst after man's salvation, and the chalice which His Father had given Him to drink; for clearly in His inner man He felt His Father drawing and calling Him, that Father to Whom He could not go, save by the road of His Passion. Of a truth He had given and resigned Himself wholly up to His Father's will, and He suffered Him to work in Him, offering Himself in all things as His instrument, and listening in silence to what He was saying to His soul. For in His humanity He proved Himself a most fitting instrument to accomplish His Father's work, and all that He required of Him; even as He had taught His disciples not to fear, when they stood before kings and governors, nor to take thought what they should answer, but rather to wait for the Spirit of the Father, Who should teach them when and how to speak.

Then, when the false witnesses had been heard, and no cause of death found in our Lord, the wicked high-priest was troubled, and carried away by rage out of his seat, said 139
unto our Lord: "I adjure Thee, by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be Christ, the Son of God." Now when our Lord heard Himself addressed by His own divine Name, out of reverence to His Father, and by the Spirit shining in Him, He answered: "Thou hast said that I am. Nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Then the high-priest rent his clothes, and said: "He hath spoken blasphemy, what further need have we of wit-

nesses? Behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye?” Then all those mad men with one voice cried out, and said: “He is guilty of death.” And at the same time, running upon Him with one accord, as fierce lions upon some gentle lamb, they all loosened the reins of their envy, and vomited upon Him all their rage and hatred, without measure and without compassion. And one spat in His face, and another smote Him on the head, and another on the neck, while others again tore His hair and His beard. Some, moreover, out of inborn malice, cruelly wounded His fair face with their nails. This, too, He had testified of old by His prophet, saying: “I turned not away My face from them who reproached Me and spat upon Me.” And again, “I gave My cheeks to the pluckers.” Of a truth they did upon Him what they would, nor could they glut their cruel rage. 140 Nay, had it been possible, in their mad fury they would have reduced Him to nothing. But His hour had not yet come.

It was a custom with the Jews, that when they wished to show contempt to a man, on account of his wickedness and guilt, they spat in his face, as if to avenge the wrong done to God. And this they too often did with intemperate cruelty, so as to take away the breath of not a few, and to suffocate them. Here, therefore, we are allowed to imagine, that this torment of our Lord was not less than death itself, and that in this grievous strait He would have been deprived of breath, had not His Godhead saved Him to suffer still greater punishments. For, as the Evangelist saith, they not only spat, but they *spat out*, that is, they fetched their foul spittle from the depths of their chest, and cast it into His face, yea, and even into His blessed and most gentle mouth. What greater contempt or contumely could they have shown the Lord of Glory? Never to any thief, or to any one condemned to death, had been shown such contempt, or derision, or shame, as was now shown to our Lord after His condemnation. With such indignities did they treat Him, that hardly the form of man remained to Him. And His fair face was so swollen from the blows, so beset with spittle, so crimsoned with blood, so torn by their nails, and likewise the blood and spittle were so mingled together, 141 that our sweet Saviour’s face was pitiable to behold, and would have moved a heart of stone to pity and compassion. And because the grace of His face had been such as by its mere look to soften sinners, and draw them unto Him, so those wicked men put a veil upon Him, that they might not be moved by any kind or pitiful feeling, but might pour forth according to their desire all their rage and cruelty upon Him. Therefore without mercy they cruelly struck Him, and at the same time mocking Him, said: “Behold our Prophet! Prophesy unto us, O Christ, who it is that struck Thee?” Thus whatever annoyance, and insult, and cruelty, they could conceive in their devilish heart, this they did to our most patient Lord. Nor even yet was their thirst quenched. For after that they had vomited upon Him all the poison of their bitterness, and were themselves utterly tired and exhausted, they handed Him over to their servants, that they might spend the rest of the night in guarding Him, and annoying Him, while they betook themselves to rest. But to our exhausted, and wearied, and agonizing Lord was no rest given, nor even breathing-time, but He was handed over to their wicked followers, 142

who all that night inhumanly troubled Him. It is indeed the opinion of S. Jerome, that those annoyances and punishments which they inflicted on our Lord on that night, will only be made known at the day of judgment. Wherefore the devout, who desire to meditate on our Lord's Passion, ought to do something in honour of those secret sufferings of God, and to offer them to the Eternal Father, to Whom they are well known, in satisfaction for their own secret and unknown sins.

Now then, O my soul, and as many as love Jesus, let us go and behold with inward sorrow, in what distress and affliction our sweet Jesus, the joy of heaven, then was. Where is the heart that can refrain from tears, when he seeth the Lord of Glory, the King of Heaven, so basely treated? O beautiful in form above the sons of men, how art Thou deformed! Thou, Who art the mirror of eternal brightness, Whose beauty is the marvel of the elements, art led about covered with a vile and filthy linen cloth! Of a truth the prophet saw all this with great sorrow, when he said: "We have seen Him, and there was no beauty in Him. And we accounted Him as a leper, and as one smitten by God, and humbled." Let these words cut into thine heart, O my soul, and set this exceedingly afflicted form or image before the eyes
of thine heart, and understand that so pitiable is it, that the prophet, although enlightened 143
by God, could find no words to express it; but compared Him to a leper, at the very sight of whom, every one shrinketh away. Yes! Christ's loving face was so swollen with the blows, so veiled in blood, so full of spittle, so cut and wounded by their finger nails, that there remained to Him no more the form of man, nor the beauty.

Let this Passion pierce thine heart, O my soul, and be thou inflamed by the mighty love which worked all this. Be ashamed, O proud man, vile dung as thou art, who seemest to thyself to be somewhat forgetful all the while that thou art dust, and ashes, and dirt, and less than nothing. See how the Son of God was humbled for thy sins; how the glory of heaven, Whose majesty passeth all understanding, for thy sake was despised and set at nought. Observe, O thou dust of earth, so greedy of revenge, so unyielding, so cruel and impatient, how the Lord of lords most patiently bore all this grievous affliction, and this too, at the hands of vile wretches, and worthless slaves, and for thy sins. Of a certainty, in all this trouble and annoyance, thou wilt not find that even once He contracted His forehead
into wrinkles, or opened His mouth to curse, or stretched forth His hands to defend Himself.
And thou canst not suffer even one little word for God's sake, without straightway showing 144
thine anger by word, and deed, and sign, and gesture, and look. Thou confessest indeed thy sins to God, and He hath mercy upon thee, and taketh thee back into His grace, and layeth on thee some little punishment by way of satisfaction. He permitteth some cross to come to thee, and desireth that thou shouldst carry it for His sake in return for all the wrong thou hast done, and brought upon Him by thy sins. But straightway thou breakest forth into complaints, murmurings, impatience, and art unwilling to carry the cross which God hath laid upon thee; nay, thou thinkest that thou art wronged therein by God. What else is this,

except, in reality and by thy acts to declare, and to say that thou wilt not perform the satis-
faction laid on thee by God, that thou wilt rather after this life suffer punishment in flames
of brimstone, than here undergo a little affliction? Thou hast desired fire; the fire shall come
to thee; thou rejectest God's mercy, thou shalt not be able to find it. Here thou despisest His
grace, afterwards thou wilt feel His justice. For He saith: "What profiteth thee to ask for
grace, saying: 'Lord, Lord,' when all the while thou doest not what I tell thee?" Of a truth
thou wouldst desire that in all things God should suffer thee to do thine own will, to satisfy
all thy sensuality and lust; that He should fulfil every desire of thine heart, and that not even 145
one little harsh word should be spoken to thee, and yet that through His merits all thine
iniquities should be forgiven, and that thou thyself should be raised without any punishment
to His eternal glory, as if thou wert worthy thereof; nay, thou wouldst wish Him to submit
Himself in all things to thee, and to become unjust for thy sake. But thou art deceived, utterly
deceived. Not at so low a price doth He reckon His kingdom. It cost Him far too dear. It
behoved Christ to suffer, and so to enter into His glory; if thou refusest to suffer, remain
outside. He saith: "He who would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross
daily and follow Me." Wherefore, if in a true spirit thou desirest the grace of God, confess
to Him thy sins, hate and turn from thy sins, lay thyself wholly open to His correction, and
offer thy whole self to Him, saying with the Prophet: "I am ready for scourges." Throw
thyself on Him, ready for everything, and cheerfully with thy own free will embrace the
cross which He hath laid upon thee. Look not to its heaviness and trouble, but to Him, Who
layeth it on thee; for of a truth our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who hath gone before
thee with His own cross, and to Whom thy weakness is well known, will lay no burden upon 146
thee above thy strength. For His nature is goodness, and He will be with thee, and stand by
thy side in all thine afflictions, as He hath done to all the saints. He will not be unmindful
of His mercy, if only thou knowest how to lay aside thine own will, thy murmurings and
complaints. Suffer Him therefore to do with thee as He willeth, that He may perfect His
work in thee. And without doubt in this thy lowly subjection, He will show thee much mercy,
and all the bowels of His compassion will be moved towards thee, and He will pardon all
thy wanderings, and He will accept this thy resignation and good will, even as of old He
accepted that of our Father Abraham, when he took his only son to offer him to God, and
He will spare thee also, and show favour unto thee, even as He did unto Abraham's son
Isaac. For He desireth exceedingly to give thee His everlasting glory, yet it is His will that
thou shouldst do somewhat thyself, that in justice this may be bestowed upon thee; and
what He wisheth thee to do is this, to submit thyself to Him in obedience of heart, and to
suffer Him to perfect His work in thee, and to keep His grace, lest it be frustrated in thee.
It was thus that we read of all the saints, how they suffered numberless evils, and led a severe
and austere life, that they might be worthy to be joint-heirs with Christ in His Father's 147
kingdom.

But now let us go back to our most loving Lord, from Whom for a little while we have
wandered; and let the flood of our tears, which meanwhile hath been stayed, now again be
allowed lovingly to flow. What, O my soul, I pray thee, wouldst thou have done, hadst thou
been there, and hadst seen all that contempt and affliction cast upon thy Lord? Wouldst
thou not have run forward to Him out of burning love, and embraced Him, and washed
His disfigured face with thy tears, and lovingly lovingly kissed Him? Wouldst thou not have
spoken to Him the kindliest and most friendly words that thou couldst think of, saying:
"sweet Jesus, my Lord and God, my heart can no longer bear that these wicked men should
thus persecute, and despise, and inhumanly treat Thee. For exceeding sorrow my heart will
break, if any longer I shall see Thee in such woe. O Jesus, my hope, my comfort and my
love, Whom my soul loveth, who will grant unto me, that I may suffer for Thee? It is not
Thou Who hast sinned, but I. O fairest and most beautiful of the sons of men, how full of
shame, and disfigured, and without beauty, Thou art become! Where hath Thy beauty gone
to? Why art Thou humbled so? How hath all this mighty guilt been laid upon Thee, to which 148
Thou art utterly a stranger, and of which Thou art wholly innocent? See! it is the blood of
our sins that is sprinkled on Thy garments, and for us Thou Thyself hast been made the
reproach of men, and the outcast of the people. Ah! who hath delivered Thee over to these
wolves? O my soul, wilt thou not cleave to thy Lord by these words with thy whole body,
wilt thou not take Him in thine arms and defend Him, wilt thou not rebuke those wicked
men, and say: "Ah! do not rage, I beg of you, with such exceeding cruelty against the Son
of God, and the Lord of us all. Seize hold of me rather, and do to me whatever pleaseth you.
For this innocent Lamb hath not sinned. It is I who have sinned, and who am worthy of
death. It is I whom ye should spit upon, it is I whom ye should mock, and strike, and perse-
cute; on me glut your cruel thirst, on me quench your burning rage, on me accomplish all
your hatred and poisonous malice, on me work out all your will,—only let my Lord Jesus
go. For I cannot bear the contempt and wrong which ye cast upon Him." Oh! how could
the Eternal Father bear to see the wrong and the shame of His glorious Son? Did He not
fearfully avenge His Prophet Eliseus, when he was mocked at by children, and this more
from childish thoughtlessness than from malice? Yet His only and most dear Son He would 149
not avenge, but gave Him wholly up to the rage and malice of the Jews. O most loving
Father, what is man that Thou lovest him so; that Thou hast given over to these ravening
dogs, so worshipful, and good and dear a Son, for the sake of a wicked and damnable sinner;
that for the sins of Thy people Thou hast smitten Him so fearfully? Oh! how could Thy
fatherly Heart suffer Thy most gracious Son, Who never did aught against Thy will, to lie
under the weight of the sins and debts of all Thy people, and at the same time to drink to
the dregs the chalice of bitterness and wrath, which our sins had mingled! How hast Thou
left Him in all His affliction, and cast Him off as an exile and an enemy, that we who were
Thine enemies and children of wrath, might be made Thy friends and children of adoption?

How is Thine Heart so absorbed and drunk with love for man, that Thou seest not how much Thine only Son is suffering? Nothing moveth Thee, though Thou art lavishing a treasure beyond all price. Thou carest for no labour, no sorrow, no expense, if only man may be saved. Therefore it is that Thou hast exposed and wholly given over to the will of wicked men Thine only-begotten Son, just as if Thou hadst cast Him from Thee in indignation, and adopted man in His stead. 150

O sweet Father, I offer Thee the measureless resignation and obedience of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, and especially that immense love of His, whereby He willingly offered Himself to suffer all this intolerable affliction and torment; choosing to be forsaken by Thee, and chastised, and beaten, and inhumanly and cruelly chastised, in order that we might obtain mercy and peace. Likewise all those cruel blows, and mockings, and the spittle and derisions, and whatever Thy beloved Son underwent according to His Heart's desire on that bitter night, I offer Thee for my sins. O Father of mercies, have mercy upon me for Thy dear Son's sake! For although I have sinned through weakness, yet now out of His love hath Thy Son paid all my debt, for His goodness and love are stronger than all sin. Oh! if my sins were placed in one scale, and the merits of Thy Son in another, the latter would far outweigh the former. Wherefore, I beseech Thee, let His Passion be to my profit, since for my sake He suffered, and let His sacred wounds be a salve for my wounds. Let His most pure Blood wash away the filth of my heart; His humility blot out and excuse my pride; His obedience my disobedience, His patience my impatience. O Abyss, from which flow all good things, grant me, by the name of Thy dear Son, the grace to correct my evil life, and then to live 151
according to Thy most gracious will. Enlighten my blind heart with the shining rays of Thy divine light, that I may know my sins, and frailty, and vileness, and that thus, knowing myself thoroughly, I may thoroughly humble, despise, and submit myself not only to Thee alone, but to all men for Thy sake, so that I may faithfully follow the footsteps of Thy dear Son's humility and obedience. Grant unto me, O my God, that I may perfectly deny and forsake myself, and all things that are lower than Thou, so far as is pleasing unto Thee, and so far as such things may be an obstacle in the way of my obtaining a perfect love of Thee; that I may love Thee, and that in this love nothing may come between me and Thee, and that I may be so fastened to Thee by the nails of pure love, that neither adversity nor prosperity, no, nor any affliction may be able in any way to separate me from Thee. Amen.

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THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mary followeth Jesus her Son.

Let us see now, where God’s tender Mother hath gone, and whether she will ever appear in public, or whether, peradventure, with the apostle she hath forsaken her Son. Of a truth, although the apostles staggered in faith, grew cold in love, and wavered in hope; although fear had scattered the sheep far away from the Shepherd, and cut off the branches from the Vine, yet did one branch remain whole and unhurt, and that was the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was indeed full of the sap of faith. For it was not possible that Christ’s Mother should fall into doubt, as to whether Jesus was the Son of God, since she knew that she herself had conceived Him by the Holy Ghost, without contact of man; nor could she in any wise forsake Him, with Whom she had been made one spirit in God. Indeed the Spirit of God, of Whom she was full, bore witness in her concerning the Son of God, that it behoved Him thus to suffer for His Father’s glory. For as S. Paul saith: “He who cleaveth unto God is one spirit.” Wherefore it is altogether probable, that the Holy Ghost had gathered into His embrace all the powers of the soul of God’s Virgin Mother, and had claimed with all power the allegiance of her whole will, and understanding, and love and affections, lifting up her created spirit to the glory of the Father, and rendering subject to the law and the 153
other Scriptures, in all that concerned her Son. Hence, even as Christ sought not His own Self, but to do His Father’s gracious will, and work out the salvation of souls, so also Mary spared not her only-begotten Son, but herself offered Him cheerfully for all that Passion, which God the Father required Him to bear. Nor did she take heed of the sword, which was to pierce her heart, nor consider the treasure beyond price, of which she was to be deprived, nor dwell even for one hour on that dear Son of hers, or on all the joy and comfort from Whom, and from which she was to be torn away. But she resigned her whole self, with all the powers of her soul, to do God’s gracious will, ready to bear all the distress, affliction, and grievous torment that might come upon her, as if she too in the spirit of her Son had said: “If this chalice cannot pass from me, except I drink it, O Lord, Thy will be done!” But to no one can it appear doubtful, that that blessed Mother, and our Lady was inflamed with such love towards God and all mankind, and so thirsted for the salvation of souls, that most gladly would she have undergone the death of the Cross, if so it had seemed good unto God Almighty. And because that could not be, she inwardly underwent so cruel a cross and sorrow, that she was unable to bear it without her heart breaking. 154
And even as our Lord Jesus Himself, although ever united with His Father’s will, nevertheless in His Humanity, feared and dreaded death, so that at the thought of His Passion hanging over Him, He became sorrowful even unto death, and His sweat was of blood, falling in thick drops upon the ground. So also it could not be, but that that Mother’s Heart was pierced by the sharpness of a sorrow beyond all understanding.

Of a truth it would have been for her a far more pleasant thing to die with Him, than to live without Him, and to behold with her own eyes His bitter death. For how should she not love with exceeding vehemence that loving Lord and God of hers, Who in form was beautiful and fair above the sons of men, Who had folded her heart to His bosom, and utterly melted it in His own love, and Who had chosen her from among all women, and had raised her high above them all, and had honoured, and blessed, and hallowed her! How should she not love Him, Who possessed in Himself, and Who had deified all the powers of her soul, her will, and understanding, and memory, and love, and, together with herself, had transformed them into Himself, so that she rejoiced at the thought of His Godhead, and at
the sight of His Manhood, with joy beyond all understanding, and listened to His sweet 155
sayings with delight unutterable? For what was not Jesus, ever to her a cross? and therefore to suffer all poverty, and affliction, and persecution, and contempt for His sake, and with Him was to her an inward joy, and an exceeding great delight. Oh! surely no mother ever embraced her son with so much love, as the Blessed Virgin her only Son, nor did ever mother grieve for her son's leaving her, like this Mother. But because the Eternal Father could bestow upon His only-begotten Son no more excellent or noble gift than that of His Cross and Passion,—for after Himself this is the most gracious and blessed gift He can give His dearest friends—therefore it was that He bestowed the same gift upon the Virgin who knew no stain. And as Christ was obedient unto the Father, even unto the death of the Cross, so also the most Blessed Virgin Mary was ready to obey God even unto the same death; for the suffering which her dear Son bore in His Body, she in her compassion bore in her heart. Wherefore, after the Name of Christ, Almighty God hath exalted her name above every name, and hath blessed her above all creatures. And as she had been chosen by God to co-operate in the new birth of the human race, so it was His will that she should also cooperate
in the Passion; that as she had been to us our Mother, in bringing forth our Saviour, so too 156
she might be our deliverer, by inwardly bearing with her Son the Cross of His Passion, and by feeling within her heart the exceeding sharp sword of sorrow. For as the Father of heaven offered His only Son on the altar of the Cross, a living Sacrifice, and still offereth Him in the Holy Sacrament for the salvation of man, that He may be an everlasting Mediator between Himself and men, so also He suffered His elect daughter, the Blessed Virgin Mary, to suffer hard things, and He accepted her offering as a grateful sacrifice for the advantage and salvation of the whole human race; that she too might become an everlasting mediatrix between God and men, and offer herself with all her sorrow and all her virtues in the sight of God, for all who shall call upon her, so as to turn, through the merits of her afflictions, the wrath of God into His mercy, and that standing beneath the wood of the Cross in her exceeding sorrow, and gazing in bitterness on the fruit of the tree of life, she might cooperate in man's redemption.

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Moreover, He had here stored up an almost infinite treasure-house of merits, wherefrom He might help before God all who are in wretchedness, and might so fill her own heart with spiritual virtues, as to become to all men a most faithful Mother, overflowing with mercy beyond measure.

O Mary, fountain of grace, chief of all the martyrs! This was not the beginning of thy dolours; this was not the beginning of thy torments; this was not the first renouncement of thyself under obedience to God; but just as Christ thy Son had subjected Himself from the beginning to His Father's gracious will even unto death, and all His life long had, of His own free will, undergone poverty, persecutions, obloquy, and contempt; so thou too, O our sweetest Lady, didst give thyself wholly to God, when thou didst consent to become the Mother of God's Son, and didst say: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word." Moreover Christ was born that He might die. As then thou didst offer thyself for the generation of the Son of God, so also didst thou resign thyself unto His death and Passion. Hence, as at the Nativity thou wert the happiest of all mothers that have ever been, so at the Passion thou wert the most sorrowful; and thou, who in bringing forth thy Son didst escape all pain and anguish, during His Passion wert bowed down beneath the whole bitter heap of affliction. O most tender Mother, how faithfully didst thou take thy cross upon thy shoulders, and follow thy dear Son, and bear in thine heart all His bodily 158
and outward Passion. For His Cross was thine, and thine was His. And as Eve rashly took of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and thus caused all men's loss in Adam, so didst thou take upon thee sorrow from the tree of the cross, and when thou hadst eaten more than enough of its bitter fruit, didst, together with thy Son, redeem man.

O Mary, mother of grace! how overflowing were thy blessed breasts, when thou didst undergo, together with thy dear Son, such cruel torments for thy children! And who can reckon up all the cares and burdens, all the poverty, and affliction, and trouble of these three-and-thirty years which thou didst suffer with thy Son? Of a truth, whatever persecution and affliction thy only One underwent at the hands of the Jews, all this thou, His most tender Mother, hast borne. For by a certain marvellous love drawing thee within Him, thy soul lived in Him; and so no trouble or sorrow could come upon Him, when thou wert looking on, without thy soul being at the same time tormented by all that He suffered in His body. Every man who is truly devout to thee, and who holdeth thy dolours in veneration, may here still more carefully and deeply meditate and think upon these things in his own heart. 159

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Of the Compassion of the Virgin Mother for her Son.

O Blessed Mother of God, and ever Virgin Mary, where is the heart that can conceive how heavy must have been the cross and the affliction which thou didst suffer on that sad night, when thy dear Son, the only comfort of thy heart, was given into the hands of wicked men, and was forsaken by His own disciples! We may indeed believe, O sweet Mother, since thou wert full of the Holy Ghost, that thou sawest in spirit all that sorrow and torment which thine only Son underwent on that fearful night. For as for the sake of man's salvation He would not spare His own fair, and young, and blooming Body, but rather deliver it to death, so He spared not that Mother's heart of thine, but suffered it to be pierced by the sword of sorrow. Hence, also, He foretold thee all His Passion, that He might make thee share in all His merits and afflictions, and that thou mightest cooperate in the work of 160
man's redemption, so that thy maternal breasts, filled with all merits, might ever have ready the milk of grace, and pour it forth in all abundance on every one who presseth them by devout prayer.

O Mary, Mother most sad, how bitter, how sorrowful was that night to thee, when Simeon's sword pierced into thy heart! How mournful then was the song of thy matin-prayers! Thy hymn was a hymn of woe; instead of jubilee, thou didst utter groans, and thy spirit was full of anguish. Oh! how sad were the words, how pitiable the sighs, yet how fiery, that thou didst send up to thy Father in heaven! With how fervent and devout a heart didst thou pray to the Father of heaven for thy Son, offering and commending Him wholly unto Him. And although in the body thou wert not near thy Son, yet all that thou knewest Him to suffer, pierced thy heart as much as if thou hadst suffered it in thine own body; and thy very heart burned within thee as in a burning furnace, and melted away, and withered up, for exceeding burning love and the wasting flame of thy affection and thy cross. Who can conceive how fiery were thy words, how glowing were the sparks which thy heart of fire sent up all that night long? Peradventure thou didst utter some such words as these: 'O Jesus, my Son, my sweet Son Jesus, who hath taken Thee from me? Who hath torn a Mother from 161
so dear a pledge of love? Why cannot I see Thee, O longed for light of mine eyes? Who will give to me, O Jesus, my child, that I may suffer for Thee, die for Thee? O Jesus, only comfort of my heart, why did I not go with Thee to death? Why did I not straightway follow Thee, when Thou wentest away? O sweet Jesus, dear Sons where art Thou passing this night? In whose hands art Thou? What art Thou now suffering! Oh! if those raging dogs would only vomit forth their cruelty on me, and let Thee go Thy way unhurt! O Jesus, my hope, my nourishment, my sweet delight, why have I not died for Thee, that I might not now see in Thee all the sorrow of my heart? For sweeter would it have been to die, than to see Thee, my sweet and only Son, in such great distress. O my Jesus, my life, my nourishment, the

help of my soul, my sweetness and consolation, where now is the promise of Thine angel, when he said to me, that I should become Thy Mother without woe, full of grace, blessed above the rest of women? Of a truth I seem to be the most unhappy of all women, whom the world containeth; a Mother above all mothers that have been ever found, full of most bitter sorrow My affliction is indeed exceeding great, my heart overfloweth with bitterness, 162
my spirit fainteth for anguish, and my sorrow is above woman's sorrow.

These and such like words did Christ's blessed Mother pour forth all that night long, and wore herself away in tears, and sighs, and tender complaints, and lamentations. And just as all that night Christ was never without the cross, so was His sweet Mother never for one moment free from fearful sorrow. O Mary, most faithful Mother, with what courage didst thou then follow thy Son? How hath that love, which by its fire had urged thy Son, to hasten of His own accord to the place, where the cup of bitterness was waiting for Him, moved thee too, to hasten where the sword of grief hung ready sharpened to pierce through thy Virgin heart into the inmost recesses of thy soul? O glorious Queen of heaven! how sadly wert thou led along the way by thy friends! How didst thou move them all to tears by that sad voice of thine! Who can conceive how sorrowful was this thy journey? For the nearer thou camest to the city, the deeper wert thou plunged in thy grief. Nor can we doubt, that so long didst thou continue on the way, until thou camest into the presence of thy Son, either as He was being led to Herod, or as He was being brought back from Herod to Pilate, or as Pilate was bringing Him forth to the people, saying: "Behold the Man." Who can understand the sorrow that seized thee, when thou sawest that same only Son of thine, so 163
cruelly bound, so wickedly disfigured by blows, and spittle, and blood, that almost He seemed to have lost the form of man? Indeed, it is wholly probable, that our loving Lord looked at His sweet Mother as calmly as He could, and spoke by loving look what He could not say in words. But, O gentle Mother, how did thy heart then melt away within thee, like wax in the heat of the fire? How wert thou then utterly dissolved in tears? Yet, as these things are not found in the Evangelists, it is not expedient for many to dwell upon them. But the things that here have been written, have been written to excite in us devotion and compassion for the Blessed Virgin. For the rest, each one can and ought to meditate upon them still more thoroughly, and more deeply, in his own heart.

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THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Jesus is delivered to Pilate.

Very early in the morning, at the first hour of the day, those blood-thirsty and cruel men met together, that they might deliver Jesus to death. Their pestilential envy and blood-thirstiness gave them no rest, while their mad rage so devoured and inflamed their hearts, that almost like mad dogs, they greedily thirsted after the innocent Blood of that meek Lamb. They led Him, therefore, into their council-chamber, and again questioned Him; and when they heard Him say that He was the Son of God, they cried out: “What further need have we of witnesses? Out of His own mouth we have heard.” Then they led Him bound and shamefully disfigured to Pilate, to be condemned to death by that uncircumcised dog; that is to say that Pilate, when he saw Him so despised by the Jews, and condemned and cast off by the high-priests, might judge Him to be some wicked wretch, and so might indict Him, and sentence Him to death, and hand Him over wholly to the priests, to do with Him according to their will.

This then is the third procession of our Lord Jesus, which for our sakes He undertook
in His Passion with sorrow unutterable. See now, O my soul! with exceeding grief and 165
compassion, how these truculent men led thy Lord God, chained and wretchedly disfigured, and marked all over with every sign of condemnation that they could think of, to Pilate the judge. Oh! who can think of the shame, and the reproach, and the affliction, and the annoyance, and the contempt which they caused our sweet Jesus to suffer on the way? Oh! with what ignominy did they lead the Lord of glory, Who is all honour and glory, to a profane and heathen man, to be condemned by him to death, just as if He had been the most wicked of robbers?

But when they had come to Pilate, without judgment, and without reason, they all with one accord barked out their false charges against our Lord Jesus, and heaped their lies upon Him, so that they might deafen Pilate with their noise, and obtain from him, by the clamour of their savage words, what by truth and justice they had not been able to obtain; and that Pilate, when he heard them all asking the same thing, might fear to oppose them all.

Come then, O all ye faithful of Christ, I pray you, and let us see, how our Lord, like an innocent lamb, stood there, ready to be slain for the sake of our salvation. There sat Pilate, puffed up with pride of state, as His judge. On either side of them were ranged His savage torturers, waiting for Pilate’s sentence, ready to crucify and kill Him. Behind stood the
wicked crowd of cruel Jews, roaring like lions, and uttering horrid cries. In the midst of 166
them all, that meek Lamb opened not His blessed mouth to defend or excuse Himself, for He too was ready; ready, that is, to die for the salvation of those very wretches. With terrible eyes and cruel countenance did the cruel and wicked Jews scowl upon Him, and gnash their teeth; yet all the while our loving and tender Lord stood there in lowly shame, His eyes cast

down, His hands bound, ready to drink the chalice which His Father had given Him. And
Pilate, moved by such exceeding lowliness and patience, to disdain rather than to kindliness,
spake to Christ roughly enough, and said: “Speakest Thou not to me? Knowest Thou not,
that I have power to crucify Thee, and that I have power to let Thee go?” Ah! who would
not be kindled to humility, and patience, and love, at the sight of the Lord of lords, Who is
to come to judge the living and the dead, standing there before that vile man, to be con-
demned by him, and bearing with such patience all that cruel wrong, and shame, and con-
fusion, and contempt, and ignominy. Yet, wretched men that we are, we can hardly suffer
one little word of reproach for the love of God! For if aught be done against us by our en- 167
emies, for a whole year do we carry in our hearts both anger and hatred, wasting ourselves
wretchedly away by the very madness of our wrath. Nor do we heed, how the Lord of Majesty
suffereth daily at our hands, reproach, and unfaithfulness, and wrong, and contempt, all
the many times when we despise His holy commandments, and oppose His will, and neglect
His grace, or receive it in vain, and when we daily crucify Him again, and mock Him, and
pierce Him with cruel wounds, and shed His Sacred Blood. For we fear not to commit ac-
cursed and hateful sins, for which Christ suffered all this. Nevertheless, our gracious God
is ever ready to take us back into His grace, to forgive us our sins, and not only to forgive,
but to forget them, and so to forget them, as to confirm upon us even greater grace and
friendship. For when we turn to Him with our whole hearts from our sins, Christ is ready
to be our Intercessor and Advocate, and to place Himself between His Father’s wrath and
us, and our sins, and to offer Himself wholly with all His Passion to the Father for our tres-
passes and negligences. Yet we, puffed up and wretched, who are but ashes and dust, can
hardly forgive the wrong of one little word, or look with calm eyes upon those who have
offended us. Therefore hath God well said, that He will forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive 168
them that trespass against us.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

A Prayer that we may perfectly follow and love Jesus.

O Jesus, my hope, life, nourishment and comfort, Thou light of my heart, joy of my soul, refreshment of my spirit, my health and my rest, what shall I render unto Thee for Thy numberless benefits, which Thou hast vouchsafed to bestow upon me, Thy most unworthy creature! How shall I be able to love Thee in return for Thine immense love, since it is so infinite and overflowing, that all my understanding and all the powers of my soul faint away for very wonder! How can I ever forget Thee in my heart? How can I ever love to labour, for aught save to repay Thee for Thy mighty love, and to satisfy it? For if I spend myself even a thousand times, what am I compared to my Lord? How ever can this marvellous work go out of my memory, that not only Thou, the Lord of lords, but also the Judge of all creatures, hast vouchsafed to become, as it were, the servant of servants, and a guilty and wicked man, and hast desired with the malefactors to be sentenced to a shameful death? 169
Behold I, a wretched and vile sinner, condemned by my own conscience, desire in the eyes of men to appear just, and to have a zeal for virtue; and if aught of honour or praise is given me, if any, on that do I lean with satisfaction. Why is this, O loving Lord, except that I do not seek Thine honour and glory with all my strength, and all my power? But why do I not seek Thy glory, except that I do not love Thee with my whole heart? And why do I not love Thee as much as I ought, except that I still love myself, and have not as yet despised and denied myself? This is why I do not seek Thee, O my God, with my whole strength, but rather seek myself in many ways. This is why I do not walk in the holy footsteps of Thy lowliness, and patience, and obedience, and resignation. But, O most merciful God! have mercy on me, Thy most wretched creature, for I confess to Thee my weakness and perverseness. Help me, O Lord my God, to deny and destroy myself, and so to crucify my pleasure-loving nature, that I may resist sin even unto blood. I cannot do anything without the help of Thy grace. And although my love be not strong as death, so as to be able, like Thy holy martyrs, to suffer myself, by the death of my body, Thy shameful death, yet do Thou vouchsafe so to strengthen my spirit, that in part, and by degrees, I may pay my debt to 170
Thee, which as a whole, and at once, I cannot pay; and that so much the more I may die to myself for Thy honour, in all things that please the senses, and offer obstacles to Thy love, as I am the less able to undergo the death of the Cross for Thy sake, as Thou hast done for me, and so many martyrs after Thee have done. And what other reason can there be, O loving God! that I am so frail, and useless, and unstable, and changeable, except that I do not love Thee, my God, with the whole strength of my heart? Help me, then, that I may love Thee exceedingly from my inmost heart. Inflame my heart with love of Thee, wound it with Thy love.

I confess, indeed, O gracious God, that Thou desirest to be loved by all men, nor dost Thou refuse Thy love to any man, who is fit and able to receive it. I know also, O sweet God, that to all my sins it must be ascribed, that Thy love hath grown cold within me. For my many faults come in between Thee and me, and are an obstacle to Thy love, so that it cannot have place in me, an4 accomplish its gracious work. For Thy Holy Spirit, Who is love itself, cannot dwell in a vessel that is unclean, nor in a body subject to sin. O Jesus, Thou Saviour Whom I cannot see, behold, I confess to Thee, that I am a vessel full of sin and uncleanness; 171 but if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean, for Thou art that Lamb without spot, Who ‘takest away all the-sins of the world, Who wast slain for our sins, crucified for our iniquities, and wounded that Thou mightest heal our wounds; and Thou hast shed Thy sacred Blood, to cleanse us from all stain of sin. Wherefore I pray Thee, O most loving Jesus, to wash away in Thy purest Blood whatever in me is displeasing to Thee, or can come between Thy naked love and my wretched soul. Oh! take the same, and uttterly consume and bring it to nothing in the abyss of Thy divine grace, that I may deserve, without anything coming between us, to be taken captive, and bound, and wounded, and swallowed up, and transformed by Thy love, so that the old man in me, which is all carnal and earthly, being crucified and dead, the new man may be raised by Thee, and born out of Thee; that new man, made according to Thine image, that knoweth not the things of earth, seeketh no fleshly pleasures, but standeth ever upright and ready before Thee Who made it; that new man, that is guiltless of this world’s evil and free therefrom; that new man, in a word, that may continually fix its inward gaze on Thee its Saviour, Whom it hopeth by Thy grace to see clearly in a blessed 172 eternity, and in eternal blessedness face to face.

THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

Jesus is led to Herod.

After that Pilate had heard all the false and unjust accusations of the Jews, and had seen that they could show no cause of death in, Jesus, and when he had heard at the same time that Jesus was a Galilean, he sent Him to Herod, who then was ruler over Galilee. This was the fourth procession of Jesus, which He underwent in His Passion with sorrow unutterable. Oh! how those wicked men laboured, and what trouble they took, before they could deliver Jesus to death. For it could not be, that in that most pure gold, proved so, many times in the fire of affliction, they could find even one stain of any impurity whatsoever, even the slightest. Oh! with what ignominy and cruelty they led along the Lord of Majesty, to Whom is due all honour and glory, through the city in the sight of all, for the city was full of people. 173
Hence; doubtless, men ran together in crowds in their eagerness to see Christ, and so the Lord of Majesty was made a spectacle to God and men. Some mocked at Him, and inflicted on Him grievous hurt, and sorely troubled Him. Others ran after Him, heaping shame and reproach upon Him. Oh! how they hurried along with our sweet Jesus, dragging Him from one judge to another. Oh! how sick and sore were all His limbs from weariness, and all that manifold affliction and cross, which He had undergone during that long night! How worn and hurt were His feet from the stones of the public places, as they hurried on with immoderate speed, and our Lord walked bare-foot?

Learn, then, O my soul, from thy Bridegroom, to deny thyself, and to subject thyself first of all to God, and in the next place to those who are set over thee, as standing in the place of God, and also, to all men whatsoever, out of love, that after the example of thy Bridegroom, thou mayest look on thyself as the least and the vilest of all, and mayest rejoice to be the hand-maid of the servants of Christ. For if thou wishest to be a pleasing bride unto Him, and to follow Him faithfully, then must thou strip thyself wholly of thine own will and choice, even as if thou hadst never known what it was to have any will of thine own. And 174
thou must suffer thyself to be led from one to the other, far and near, to the highest and the lowest, within and without, and thou must be ever cheerfully obedient, and subject, however troublesome and hard, however painful and contrary it may be to thine own feeling, or judgment, or sensuality; even as Christ cheerfully gave Himself up to all those cruel torments, which were beyond measure painful to His tender complexion, and gladly suffered Himself to be dragged from judge to judge, from punishment to punishment, and underwent divers crosses and afflictions, one after the other. Nor did He ever draw up His face in wrinkles, or disdainful look, nor open His mouth to any complaint or murmuring. Our tender Lord regarded not the shame, or the crosses, or the wrongs which He suffered, but He was humbly obedient to His Father even unto death, and patiently submitted Himself to all the sorrows, and pains, and torments, which they inflicted on Him.

Thus, then, did those savage men lead Him to Herod. Now Herod, since he was a man full of curiosity, and puffed up,and had heard much about Christ's miracles, for a long time had been desirous to see Him. But not a word of answer could he obtain from Christ. For as he desired to see some miracle only out of vain curiosity, he was clearly unworthy to receive
even a word or a sign from the Eternal Truth. Here then, again, those crafty and blood- 175
thirsty Jews, like mad dogs, barked out their charges against Christ, and their condemnation of Him, and bringing false witnesses against Him, in order, by their loud discordant cries, to urge Herod on to judge and condemn the Christ. Yet, in the midst of all this, that gentle Lamb was humbly silent, and waited in patience for the chalice which His Father had prepared for Him.

Herod, then, when he saw that Jesus gave no sign nor answer, was troubled, and set Him at nought, and mocked Him with all his men of war, whereby our Lord Jesus suffered great shame and reproach. Of a truth, in all places, and at the hands of all, He suffereth persecution, contempt, and wrong. There is no man to relieve Him, or to show Him any kindness, or to compassionate Him in His affliction, or to speak to Him even one word of comfort. Young and old, little and great, servants and their lords, all rose up against Him; all with one accord vomited out upon Him their poisonous malice and falsehoods. All greedily thirsted for His death, and burned to shed His innocent Blood; for without pain and disgust they could not look upon Him. Thus was Christ our Lord clearly made the re-
proach of the world, and the outcast of the people. For Herod not only cast Him away from 176
him with indignation, and shamefully treated Him, but he even clad Him in a white garment, as if He had been a fool, so as by this means to provoke the whole crowd at the same moment to mock Christ. And with such ignominy and confusion he sent Him back to Pilate. This is the fifth procession of our Saviour which He undertook during His Passion for our sins.

Here every man may think with himself, how full of misery was this procession of Christ, in which, after He had been thus shamefully mocked at, and set at nought by Herod, those vile servants and murderers in their turn mocked Him and ill-used Him with great contempt, some smiting Him, others trampling on Him with their feet; some dragging Him by His garments, while not a few behind His back vomited upon Him curses and shameful words. Nor need we speak of those other numberless reproaches, wrongs, and insults, by which those impure men were carried away against Him, of which no express mention is made in Holy Writ, nor have we any certain testimony. Yet because they were the sons of the devil, they treated Christ with all the malice which they could think of at the suggestion of their father.

Behold then, O my soul! with bitter grief thy Bridegroom, the Joy of heaven, the wisdom 177
of the Father, the King of glory, thus shamefully brought down to confusion, and set at nought, so that He is now no longer a man, but an abject worm. Not only is He sentenced to death as a guilty malefactor, but even, like some poor idiot, is mocked at in His fool's

garment. Oh! who hath such a heart of steel, as not to be softened at this? Be ashamed, ye proud men, who with heads lifted up on high, march on in your pride. Blush for shame, O ye who are wise in your own eyes, forgetting that you are only dung and ashes, and vessels of earthenware full of all uncleanness. Behold! the Lord of lords, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, is mocked at as a fool; and ye yourselves, more senseless than the brute beasts, which praise their Creator according to their capacity and condition, and which observe moderation in eating and drinking, desire to be thought wise, and circumspect, and holy by men. Blush for shame; I say, O ye puffed up and proud sinners, who before God and all His saints are full of rottenness, who are wholly bent upon adorning your sack of dung and nest of worms with precious things, while the Lord of Majesty for your sake is set at nought, clad in a white and shameful garment, like a fool, and while He
who is the loftiness of heaven vouchsafeth to be humbled. 178

And you, O ye wretched and puffed up sinners, to whom is due nought but eternal damnation, are lifted up and swollen with pride! Long ago the angels fell through pride, and were cast out of heaven, yet ye trust to be able to obtain heaven by pride. Our first parents fell into great wretchedness and misery through pride, and, driven out of paradise, were for five thousand years exiles from heaven, and prisoners in hell; yet we, notwithstanding, avoid not this accursed pest, this deadly and most hateful sin! Even this rotten body of ours, conceived of unclean seed, which one day will be cast out to be devoured by worms, we know not how too curiously to adorn, and to nourish with delicate and soft food, and to treat with every comfort and convenience. But our far nobler souls, in which God hath set up His dwelling-place, and which, born of God, and created to the image of the Most Holy Trinity, will again be brought into the presence of the Divine Majesty, we suffer to perish for hunger and want.

Let us, I pray, take example from our most loving Saviour, and let us walk in His footsteps in all lowliness, poverty, resignation, and patience; since He in His greatest need had no convenience, but hung all naked on the cross, with all His limbs so stretched and nailed
thereto, that He could not even move a single limb, nor rest His head; and in His thirst He 179
had gall and vinegar to drink, and in such great poverty gave up the ghost. If then He did all this for our sins, let us also, I pray, do somewhat for our iniquities.

THE TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER.

Christ, after having been set at nought by Herod, is led back to Pilate.

From Herod those savage wretches led Christ back to Pilate, and again brought their cruel charges against Him, that they might obtain His death-warrant. Again they tried to deafen Pilate with their horrid cries, since they could bring forward no just reason or cause against our Lord. By shouts and threats they sought to drown the truth, and to overcloud reason, and to darken justice. But Pilate, when he saw that the Jews sought through mere hatred to put Jesus to death, and that Herod in like manner had found no cause of death in Him, left nothing untried in order to set our Lord free. And because he could not appease the Jews by reasoning, he asked of them, whether, according to their privilege, they would
have Him released in honour of the Paschal solemnity. But with one voice they all cried out 180
that they would rather have Barabbas. O, great blindness! O, insatiable fury of the Jews! O, unhappy exchange! They chose a wolf instead of a lamb, a wicked and hateful wretch instead of a just and innocent man, an impious one, and a thief, instead of the Author of life. In like manner, all those who desire to persevere in their sins, and fear not to offend God, and to transgress His holy commandments, deny and reject God, and choose some cruel robber, like the devil, who is the destroyer of the souls of all who consent to do his bidding.

Then Pilate asked what he should do with Jesus. And, with a horrid roar, they cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Pilate answered, "What evil hath He done? I find no cause of death in Him. But, to temper your burning rage and empoisoned hatred, and to quench a little your thirst of blood, even without cause I will chastise and correct Him, that peradventure ye may have compassion, and may cease to seek the death of this innocent Man, which He hath not deserved." Then Pilate delivered Christ to his ministers and torturers, that they might scourge Him.

Come now, O my soul, and see with mourning heart, how thy Bridegroom Jesus, the
glory of heaven, is delivered into the cruel hands of vile servants, that they may carry out 181
all their savage malice against Him. See how there are given to these raging and blood-thirsty dogs the power and the means of tearing to pieces that most pure, and noble, and virgin Body, and of shedding His royal Blood. See, how of His own will the Lord of lords gave Himself over, and subjected Himself to those abject wretches and vile slaves, suffering them to glut all their malice and cruel tyranny upon Him: and obedient to His Father in heaven, even to death, He opened not His blessed mouth to curse them, or to murmur, or to complain, nor did He stretch forth His hands to avenge Himself, nor did any change of face betray either anger or indignation. See this, all ye religious, who are stiff-necked, puffed up, and proud, who have put on indeed the outward look of obedient and religious men, but who are inwardly without resignation, morose, and given up to your own will. And, indeed, ye show this forth when any command is laid upon you that is contrary to your ever-varying

will, or your own judgment; for straightway ye break out into complaints, impatience, and
murmuring; and by word, and look, and the very impatient carriage and gestures of the
body, betray clearly enough the depth of your want of resignation, and how much ye love
your own will. Nor have ye known how to curb that nature of yours, which, far from being 182
dead, is given up to your senses, or to hide it under the shelter of religion; for you have
never manfully conquered it, nor have ye brought your own will into servitude, and therefore
both your nature and your will hold rule over you. And for this reason ye oftentimes let
your passions overflow, and ye have no peace in your hearts. For your peace lasteth no
longer than while it is with you, and you are permitted to do what ye gladly do, and to have
what ye gladly have. But see, I pray you, how willingly Christ offered Himself to death, and
with what love He seized the bitter chalice of His Passion, although His nature shrank from
it exceedingly; and how of His own accord He went forth to meet His enemies, and gave
Himself into their hands, and suffered Himself to be taken, saying, "I am He whom ye seek."
Take example then from Him, and bend your proud and stiffened neck under the divine
correction, and the commandments of God, and of those who are set over you, and who
hold the place of God towards you, for ye may be sure that whatever contempt, or murmuring, or rebellion, your prelates may receive at your hand, will all be turned to the dishonour
of our Lord God Most High. 183

THE TWENTY-FOURTH CHAPTER.

Jesus is fearfully Scourged.

From this the lictors and guards of the governor, mad with rage, took Christ, and savagely stripping Him of His garments, who is the maker of heaven and of all creatures, and who hideth the heaven with clouds, and giveth being to all, shamelessly left Him naked before all the people. There He stood, the fairest and most beautiful of men, clad only in His virgin shame and simple innocence. Oh, what a cross was this to His most pure heart, to be compelled to stand so shamefully in His nakedness before those vile wretches; for the more a man hath of true virtue, so much the more full is he of the shame of innocence. Then they bound Him so mercilessly to the pillar, that, as we read, His flesh hid altogether the cords by which He was bound, such was the tenderness and delicacy of His nature. Moreover, we find it written, that He was so cruelly bound, that the blood burst forth from His fingernails. And this they did lest He should slip out of their hands, for they held Him to be a malefactor and an impostor. 184 After this these cruel wild beasts, like savage lions, inhumanly tore Christ's fair and holy body; for they so scourged it, and ploughed it up with wounds, and mangled it with rods and all the other terrible scourges they could think of in their envious hearts, that He became wholly unlike Himself, His body being all covered with His blood, and with gaping wounds.

Nor was it only His skin that they tore with rods, but they mangled His sacred flesh by inhuman tortures, and so tore it to pieces, that all His body seemed to be left without skin, as those evil-minded ones added wound to wound, and pain to pain, and woe to woe. And when they had so cruelly torn one of His sides, so that nothing could be seen but blood and wounds, as certain doctors affirm, they loosed Him, and then bound Him again with His back to the pillar, His hands at the same time being fastened above His head. After this, they wounded by repeated scourging His sacred belly, which, as it had touched the pillar during the first scourging, was not so grievously hurt, and they tore it in like manner as they had torn His back. And the men who did this, peradventure, were fresh torturers. There were four of them, we read, and they vomited their cruelty upon Him, not less than the first had done, 185 We may gather this, and prove it from those words of the prophet: "From the sole of His foot to the top of His head, there is no health in Him."

Meanwhile, let us think what His torment must have been during all this, when they tore out the cords which had eaten into His flesh, and then again forced them back into His flesh, and inhumanly struck and wounded Him afresh. S.: Bonaventure saith that Christ here received more than five thousand wounds. Of a truth, He was so disfigured and pitiable a sight, that not only His torturers were wearied with striking, but men were also wearied with looking at Him. Nevertheless, our gracious Saviour stood there full of kindness and burning love, patiently suffering all this affliction and punishment for our sins, and with

exceeding great desire offering His fair and ruddy Body as a loving sacrifice to His Father
in heaven. For never did He suffer so much for our salvation, as not to desire to suffer more
for His Father's glory, and to testify to us the incomprehensible love of His Heart, and to
make it known as clearly as He could in very deed. Nothing sound or whole was left in His
Body, and still all the while His desire of suffering yet greater things remained in Him whole
and without distraction. The torturers' scourges had torn His whole Body, yet in His patience
love kept His Heart untouched. The torturers had grown weary of scourging Him, yet was 186
not Christ wearied of desiring to suffer. His Blood, so precious to sinners, flowed down in
large streams upon the earth, and His Spirit, in gratitude, was lifted up to His Father in
heaven. His sacred Body lay under the scourges of sin, and the prayers of His Heart were
carried by the angels to His Father in the heavenly places. His Flesh streamed down with
Blood, and His Blood itself flowed down, but His groans and fiery desires, whereby He
offered all this affliction to His Father for the sins of all mankind, went up on high. On every
side He poured Himself out upon men, but with His whole strength, and with full and
worthy reverence and praise, He stretched Himself upwards to the high presence of His
Father in heaven. Below poor man, sick and ill, drank in the medicine of life; and above, the
Father rejoiced in the patience of His Son. Man received that by which he will be saved for
ever, and God the Father that by which He will be praised through all eternity. The Son of
God was wounded in His Body, that the souls of men might recover salvation. From all His
limbs there flowed forth Blood, that He might pour the same, as a health-giving balm, into
our wounds. The grape-cluster was hung on the staff, that He might make us certain and
sure of the land of promise. The cluster was pressed in the wine-press, that He might make 187
us drunken with His love. The bowl was broken in pieces, that the oil of mercy might begin
to flow out. He dyed the tunic of His Body in purple, that as our Bridegroom of singular
beauty, He might provoke us to love Him. Grievously did He suffer in His Body, and sorely
was He afflicted, that He might make us glad in spirit. He was forsaken of His Father, that
we might be taken back into His Father's grace. His body was damp with His warm Blood,
that He might prepare for us a bath, wherein we might be thoroughly washed and cleansed
from every stain of sin. His warm Blood boiled over from His sacred Body, that He might
cause our cold and hardened hearts to melt in His love. Like water He was poured out, that
our spirit might swim in the delights of His grace. Nothing in His whole Body remained
whole, that nothing hurtful, nothing foul, nothing that was not whole, might remain in our
souls. And although on all sides He was so stricken by more than human suffering, that by
reason of the excellence and tenderness of His nature and complexion, every blow pierced
His Heart; nevertheless, His will was so subject both to God and men, and His burning desire
to accomplish to the full all that His Father required of Him, and to redeem man, was so 188
great in Him beyond all measure; in a word, He was so taken prisoner by love, that He could
utter no complaint. For He could do nothing but love, and suffer for love.

O my soul! and as many as love God, who have been redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ Jesus, and washed from your sins, come and see, with inward grief, all that God suffered for our sins, all that He underwent for our iniquities. And if this doth not bring compunction to your hearts, nor move them, then account yourselves harder than steel or stone. See how the King of glory was here wounded and disfigured for your crimes. What more do ye require of Him? If this is not enough, He is ready to suffer even more. Think ye that there remained in His Body anything unhurt or sound? Behold! He will gladly accept even death for your sins, and will suffer His Blood to be shed to the very last little drop. Yea! He will let His Heart be pierced for your sakes, that He may throw it open to you, and make known His exceeding love. Oh! who can ever find us forgetful of His measureless love? Marvellous indeed it is, that our hearts are not melted at this most burning love! How ever can we cease from praising Him and giving Him thanks, or who can busy himself with any other care, than to return in some poor little way love for love? Why is it hard for us to taste 189
some little drop of myrrh for His sake, Who suffered Himself to be swallowed up whole in a very sea of suffering for our sakes? Or how can it be ever a grievous thing for us to bear in mind His Passion, which it was not grievous for Him to undergo? O sweet Jesus, what tenderness hath overcome Thy Heart, what love hath swallowed it up, that Thou hast willed to suffer so bitter and ignominious a Passion for us wretched sinners? Why didst Thou not spare Thyself altogether, when it would have been enough indeed, so excellent and of such exceeding worth was Thy Passion, to have shed one little drop of Thy precious Blood? Why didst Thou cast Thyself so utterly away, and expose Thyself, and suffer Thyself in so humble a way to be well nigh brought down to nothing? O loving Jesus, Thou hast wished this to show forth Thy out-flowing and utterly measureless love for us, with which, from the beginning, Thou hast loved us. This is why Thou gavest Thyself wholly for us, that in our turn we might give ourselves wholly to Thee, and love Thee back again with our whole strength and all our power.

O Almighty Father, who am I, a poor vile man and worthless sinner, that Thou, for my sake, shouldst not spare even Thine Only-Begotten One? How precious, how dear was my 190
soul in Thine eyes, for which Thou gavest so noble a pledge, and which Thou hast redeemed by so precious a treasure? How hast Thou loved me from everlasting, that Thou wouldst rather that Thy Son should be wounded, and wearied, and afflicted, and tortured, and the last spark of His human life put out, than that I should perish? And how could Thy fatherly Heart suffer, O gracious Father, to see Thy beloved Son, God co-eternal and co-equal with Thee, overwhelmed by such more than mortal torments, a spectacle of woe even to His enemies? Thou comest to the help of all who are afflicted and oppressed, Thou hast pity on thieves and robbers, lending them aid even when they suffer for their sins and trespasses; why then wert Thou not by the side of the Son of Thy love? Why didst Thou not comfort Him in His sore distress? Why didst Thou forsake Him, O Father of mercies? Why were

not the bowels of Thy fatherly compassion moved for the grievous and intolerable affliction
of Thy only-begotten One? Why didst Thou not withdraw Him from the hands of the Jews?
Why didst Thou not temper His sorrow by pouring sweetness into His Heart, as Thou hast
done to Thy holy martyrs in their agony? Of a truth, O most merciful Father, Thou hast
done this in Thy divine justice, and wisdom, and goodness, that the resignation and patience 191
of Thy beloved Son might be shown forth more clearly in our eyes, that the power and
merit of His Passion might not be lessened, that the salvation of mankind might be vigorously,
mightily, and perfectly accomplished, and that, lastly, the debt of the human race might be
paid in lavish abundance. It was because Thou wouldst show forth Thy burning love towards
us, that Thou didst not spare the very last little drop of the Blood of Thy beloved Son.

Clearly, had not Christ's Death and Passion been enough to save man, both the Father
of heaven and the Holy Ghost would also have taken on them our human nature, and died
for man, rather than have suffered him to perish. Moreover, although the Son alone became
man, and suffered a bitter death for man, yet the love and tenderness of the Father and the
Holy Ghost were not the less shown forth in our regard, for in the Trinity of Persons there
is one essence, one love, one operation common to all, one and the same will. The adorable
and most holy Trinity took counsel together concerning the redemption of the human race,
and agreed together in decreeing that man should be redeemed; and because for none of
the Three Persons was it so fitting to take our human nature, as for the Son, therefore both 192
by His own free will, and by the will of the Father, and by the persuasion of the Holy Ghost,
He came upon earth; He Who was the Almighty Creator, became man, was made a creature,
by the cooperation both of the Father and of the Holy Ghost. For Christ was conceived of
the Holy Ghost by the cooperation of the Father. He saith Himself: "I work nothing of Myself;
but My Father, Who abideth in Me, He it is Who doeth the works." Now that the love of
the Son towards us is the same as that of the Father, and of the Holy Ghost, is clearly enough
shown to us by the Father, from the very fact that He delivered His own Son to death for
our sakes; and Christ Himself beareth witness to this, when He saith: "For the Father also
loveth you." And of the Holy Ghost the Apostle saith: And the Spirit Himself asketh for us
with groanings that cannot be uttered;" that is, inspireth, moveth, and exciteth us to pray,
and to give ourselves to virtue. And the Spirit beareth witness to our spirit, that we are the
sons of God, so that, in the joy of this inward witness we may cry in the same spirit, "Abba,
Father!" But what can be more blessed and delightful in this valley of tears, than for man,
out of the testimony of the Holy Ghost in his own conscience, to call God his Father? For 193
if we are sons, then are we Christ's brethren, and joint-heirs with Him.

See then, O my soul! what care the Adorable Trinity hath taken of thee. Behold, how
from everlasting God hath loved thee! Consider this, I pray you, O ye cold and hard-hearted
children of Adam! 'Think at how dear a price He hath bought you. The noblest gift that
God's Heart could conceive, the mightiest offering that God's power could give, this He

hath offered for you, nay, daily offereth in the adorable Sacrament. And as of old the Father of Heaven spared not His only-begotten Son, but offered Him to death, and that the most shameful death of the cross, for the sins of men; so even now there is not a moment, when He doth not in like manner offer Him for our sins in the most noble Sacrament of the Eucharist. And as Christ was made obedient unto the Father, even unto death, so to-day, and until the last day, He is obedient, not only to God the Father, but to all who, with faithful hearts, and longing desires, love God, and cleave to Him. But because there was no need that He should again suffer death, since His sacred death reacheth unto all sins that have ever been committed, or shall still be committed; nevertheless He ceaseth not to offer daily His Sacred Body, and His noble soul, and His precious Blood, together with all the merits of His Life and Passion, in the worshipful Sacrament of the Altar, for the remission 194
of our sins, and in memory of His Passion and Death. Of a truth He teacheth us by this, that, were it necessary, He is still ready to-day to give His worshipful Body and Blood over to death, for the sake of our salvation. For the same love which Christ then had for us, still endureth in Him, and will endure for ever.

Where then, I ask, is there such a heart of stone, as not to be moved to compunction at all this? Where is the spirit that will not rejoice at love such as this? Where is the heart that will not wholly melt away in the heat of this burning clarity? Where is the man whose understanding will not faint, for exceeding wonder, when he contemplateth God's measureless love and goodness towards us, when he perceiveth with the eyes of his heart, and searcheth the recesses of his conscience, or weigheth in the balance the mighty benefits which God hath conferred, and daily conferreth upon us poor wretched men; for of a truth they are so great, that greater can hardly be? See how Christ's gracious arms are stretched out to receive us! And His wounds are ever open, ready to pour forth upon all whatever they desire. The banners of His mercy are ever unfolded, so that we may take shelter and lie hidden beneath 195
them, for He is ever ready to receive us. More than this, He loveth us so very much, that by divine drawings, and inspirations, and inward warnings, He asketh for us more than we ask for ourselves, for He is indeed far more ready to give than we to pray.

What need of multiplying words? Of a truth, it is no small sorrow to Him, that His wounds are dried up, and can no longer bleed down mercy upon us, since very few there are, alas! who desire this with their whole hearts. Wherefore, beyond doubt, He will one day prove Himself a stern judge to those who now neglect His loving-kindness and mercy, since He burneth with such love for man, that He confesseth that His delights are to be with the children of men. If, then, with hearts meet and ready, we would suffer Him to accomplish His work and His will within us, beyond all doubt, in His exceeding goodness, He would Himself with all His gifts flow down upon us. For God is a well of living water, ever leaping

up, never ceasing to flow, save when vessels are wanting to receive it. And by one link of love doth He Himself eagerly desire to be united to man, and to build up within us His own delightful dwelling-place and longed-for temple. Nay, He longeth to be united to man by love, with an exceeding great longing, just as if He had utterly forgotten His power and 196 majesty, and only cared to be made like to man in all things. And how could He have raised us higher, and cast Himself down lower than He hath done? How could He have united us unto His Godhead more closely than He hath actually united us, when He linked together His most high and immortal nature with our mortal humanity, by taking on Him our nature? Nor is this all, for day by day, also, He giveth His most high Godhead, and all that He is, to be our food. How, then, could He have joined Himself to us in a more inward manner, than by His desire to become our food? For nothing is so closely bound up with a man as the food which passeth into his substance.

Moreover, God the Father hath also bestowed something more upon us, when He raised up our human nature in Christ as high as it could be raised, and by lifting it high above all creatures to His own Right Hand, so that our nature, which of old had been cursed, and sentenced to damnation, now became blessed, and hallowed, and wonderfully exalted above all the blessed; and what had formerly been the laughing-stock of the demons in hell, is now adored by the angels in heaven. How, then, could God have treated us with greater honour and glory, or shown us more overflowing love? Of a truth, we have obtained, through Christ 197 our Lord and Saviour, far richer salvation and glory than we lost through Adam, our first father. What more can we desire from our sweet Lord? To every man, above all to him who cleaveth unto and loveth Him with his whole heart, He is as greatly and closely attached, as if He had forgotten the heavens and the earth, and all that in them is, and had wholly perished for very love of him. This is why the loving soul crieth out in the Canticle of Canticles: "My Beloved to me, and I to Him." And so great and measureless is God's love towards the soul of man, that He seemeth to love none else but him. Yet not even by all these kindnesses and acts of love can God draw us to Himself, or move us, or inflame us with His love; so infected are our hearts with sensual love, and painted over with the likenesses of created things, and so given up to temporal goods and to the blandishments of this world, so greatly also do they pant after honours, and desire to obey and satisfy their nature in its search after pleasure. By these and such other like things, we are so held and hindered, that there lieth open to us no approach to God by love. Yea! the heavens and the earth weep for this, because men have fallen so low, that they have left their Creator to love the creature; that they have forsaken the highest and chief good, which is God Himself, to lovingly embrace the earth, and the 198 slime of earth; that they would rather be the slaves of demons, than the sons of God, that they would rather be friends of the world, than lovers of Christ; that, in a word, it is a more pleasant thing for them to be a nest of unclean spirits, than the temple of the Holy Ghost. Ah! ah! let us love Him, I beseech of you, who hath embraced us with such measureless love,

and on the other hand, by every means in our power, let us despise him, together with all his counsels and suggestions, who is the relentless murderer of souls, and who is wholly bent upon leading us with him to the place of torment everlasting.

199

THE TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER.

A devout prayer for the forgiveness of sins, and for resignation, and the love of Jesus.

O Most merciful Lord Jesus Christ, behold I, a wretched and vile sinner, cast myself, with all the humility that I can, into Thy footprints, and with entire faith and full trust in Thy measureless goodness, and with inward sorrow for all my sins, with deep sighs, bitter contrition, and burning tears, I confess to Thee all the iniquities of my past life. O gracious Jesus, by Thine infinite mercy, have pity on me, I pray; open to me the bowels of Thy loving-kindness; turn to me, a poor sinner, and guilty worm of earth, the eyes of Thy divine grace and clemency. For to whom, O sweet Jesus, laden as I am with, and buried in, numberless sins, can I fly for refuge, save to Thee, who art full of mercy? Therefore, all my evils, all my ingratitude, sensuality, anger, disobedience, levity, want of mortification, and lust; all these together I throw into the abyss of Thy divine mercy and grace, and into the sacred and bleeding Wounds which in this horrible torment Thou hast received for my salvation; and I pray Thee, O my God, that Thou wouldst so wash away all these in Thy precious and most pure Blood, that no remembrance of them may endure before Thee.

O loving Jesus, my only comfort, I come to Thee with the full and earnest desire of 200
loving Thee fervently, and of avoiding all that may draw me away from Thy love, so that I may deserve to be made one with Thee in affection, and will, and love. For Thou art all my hope; Thou art my consolation and my refuge. However much I may be troubled and cast down by my sins, yet am I no less gladdened and lifted up by Thy measureless goodness, and the merits of Thy most Sacred Passion. For whatever I have done wrong, hath been blotted out by Thy most bitter Death. Whatever is wanting to me, is abundantly filled up in me by the merits of Thy most holy Incarnation and Passion. And although my sins be great and numberless, yet are they little when compared with Thy measureless mercy. Wherefore, I trust in Thy infinite goodness, that Thou wilt never suffer me to perish, whom Thou hast created to Thine own image and likeness. Oh! despise me not, whose flesh, and blood, and brother, Thou hast vouchsafed to become. I hope, too, that Thou wilt never condemn me, whom Thou hast redeemed with such labour, and bought for so dear a ransom. O gentle Jesus! in Whom my soul trusteth, and Whom from the most inward marrow of my heart, I desire to love, make me now to feel Thy tenderness and loving-kindness, for Thou art not ignorant of my frailty. Thy Father in heaven judgeth no man, but He hath 201
given over all my sins to Thy judgment. The Holy Spirit also hath given all judgment to Thee, and whatever I have done wrong against Him, by neglecting His grace, by not obeying His instincts, by not following His attractions, by not fulfilling His requirements and vocation, and lastly, by hindering, times without number, His loving work, by my own selfishness, and restless busy-doing;—all this He hath left to Thee, and cast it all upon Thee. All my salvation is in Thy hand; whatsoever Thou pardonest is forgiven. So long as Thou wilt, O

sweet Jesus, there will never be wanting to me the means of salvation. O pitiful Jesus, have mercy upon me, for Thy Holy Name's sake! For what else is the meaning of this Thy name, Jesus, sweeter than honey, and the honey-comb, except a "Saviour"? Wherefore, O good Jesus, be to me Jesus. Why wilt Thou be angry with the leaf which is blown about by the wind; why wilt Thou punish the withered straw? Why wilt Thou be forgetful of me, who am but a frail vessel of clay, which Thine own hands have made? Although I have offended Thee, yet am I a man wholly conceived in iniquity. Let Thy grace come down upon me, and 202
Thy Wounds flow over me; let the healing balm of Thy Precious Blood be near my soul, and I shall be safe, for I am ready to fulfil Thy most gracious will. What wilt Thou have me to do, Lord? Behold! I offer my whole self to Thee, my body, soul, senses, memory, understanding, will, and all that I am, and I am ready to bear whatever Thou wouldst have me bear in time and eternity, want and abundance, abandonment and suffering. O Jesus, my only Love, grant that I may love Thee from my heart, and nothing do I ask, except to love Thee perfectly. Suffer me to be Thy lover. Thou hast commanded me, indeed, to love Thee with my whole heart, but give what Thou hast commanded, and command what Thou wilt. Pierce, I pray Thee, this heart of mine, with the sweet dart of Thy fiery love, that I may languish for love of Thee all the days of my life. Grant that I may love Thee from my heart, as Thou wouldst Thyself have me love Thee. Make me to see, O my God, how much Thou lovest me, that my whole life long, and with my whole strength, I may strive to return Thy love, and satisfy it. O kind Jesus, so fill and inebriate my heart with Thy sweet love, that all the world may be turned for me into a disgust and a cross. O loving Jesus, I long to love Thee, to receive Thee, to eat Thee, to embrace Thee with the arms of my soul, to treasure 203
Thee up in my inmost heart, where no man can take Thee from me, where I may enjoy Thee alone, and where I may rest with Thee in peace, never more to be troubled. There Thou wilt give me richly to drink of the river of Thy heavenly and divine doctrine; there Thou wilt teach me Thy more secret paths, whereby I may come to Thee in all safety and certainty; there Thou wilt be wholly my leader, and Thou wilt hide me in Thy sweet wounds, and in Thy loving Heart, until the winter of sin is over and past, and the cruel storm of temptation is hushed, and the bright sun of Thy divine grace shineth through the whole depth of my soul, setting my heart utterly on fire, and causing it to flourish in all virtue. Amen.

204

THE TWENTY-SIXTH CHAPTER.

Jesus is crowned with thorns.

After that our Saviour had been so fearfully scourged, and hurt, and tortured, that no part in all His body remained whole, and His body itself was one wide gaping wound, dreadful to behold, they loosed Him from the pillar, and led Him about naked, and streaming with blood, looking for His garments, which, after they had stripped Him, they had scattered over the court out of anger and malice. Come, then, and let us see in what misery our loving Jesus walked along, full of sorrows, trembling with cold, streaming with blood, so that every step He took was marked with His red Blood. This is what the Prophet meant, when speaking in the person of the Angel, or of loving souls, to our Lord, he said "Why is Thy garment red, and Thy vestment like the vestments of those who tread the wine-press?" Jesus answereth: "My vestments are red, O My bride, because I have trodden the wine-press alone." See now, O my soul! burning as thou art with the love of God, see now, I pray thee, with inward compassion, how thy Beloved is being treated. Thou indeed hast sinned through pleasure, and Christ hath been punished in thy stead by mighty torments. Thou hast obeyed the lusts of flesh and blood, and Christ hath given over His own Flesh
and Blood to such inhuman pains, for thy trespasses and sins. Moreover, when our Lord 205
was putting on His clothes, these servants of the devil took counsel one with the other, and said: "That seducer proclaimed Himself a King, let us, then, treat Him as a King, and crown Him." And straightway the whole cohort was pressed back into the praetorium, and Jesus along with it, so that He might be held up for scorn and mockery before all the people, and thus might be put to greater confusion. Then, again, with exceeding savageness they tore off His garments, which He had hardly time to put on, and clad Him in a purple or scarlet robe. Next, they plaited a crown of thorns, and pressed it down on His sacred Head, and gave Him a reed to hold in His hand, in place of a sceptre; and they bent their knees before Him, and did Him mock reverence, saying: "Hail, King of the Jews."

Go then forth, O ye daughters of Sion, and see the true Solomon in the diadem with which His Mother crowned Him in the day of His Heart's joy. Truly He hath loved us, and He Himself hath carried our feebleness, Himself hath borne our infirmities. Oh! with no common compassion let us go and look on Him, and see how fearful were the torments which the Son of God here underwent for our sills. Let us draw heavy sighs from our inmost
breast, let all our members, all our veins, burst forth into tears, because we have been the 206
cause of these sufferings. Let our heart melt for sorrow, and be all dissolved in tears, because we have crowned God, our Maker, so cruelly with our accursed sins. Of a truth, all these thorns plaited together, what are they but our cruel sins, which we have heaped one upon the other? By these do we day by day mercilessly wound the worshipful Head of Christ, and inflict upon Him far greater pain and reproach than they who tortured Him by these pains

at the time of His Passion. For of them is it written "If they had known Him, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory." But we both have known this Almighty King, and have clearly before us His will and commandments, yet we refuse to obey Him. We are not ashamed to resist so powerful a Lord, and to despise His commandments, yet He seeketh nothing but our salvation, and that we may be joints heirs with Him in His Father's kingdom, and that His Blood, and Passion, and labour may redound to our salvation. Oh! who can ever find words to express with how intolerable a sorrow our Lord Jesus was seized, when that fearful crown of thorns Was pressed down upon His Head? For as some affirm, that crown was formed of sea-thorns, which are exceeding sharp and stiff. Nor, indeed, were 207
they few in number, but they plaited them together into the form of a cap or helmet, so that the thorns were in great part fastened to the head, and with such great force and cruelty did they press down this fearful crown upon Christ's sacred Head, that, as S. Bernard saith, the thorns pierced into the brain, and penetrated through the veins, and nerves, and bones of the Head, so that His Blood became mixed up with His Sacred Brain, and flowed down in streams over His Face, and neck, and hair. Here let every one weigh with himself what must have been this pain. For if even one large thorn was fixed upon a man's head, what would be the state of that man's mind? Yet of a truth, as Anselm saith, "Christ's worshipful Head was punctured by a thousand thorns." Oh! let us impress His poor suffering form or image upon our hearts, so that It may never leave it more. Ah! how disfigured was this most beautiful of created forms! How destitute of all comeliness and beauty was Christ's fair face, all swollen, as it was, from the numberless blows and wounds of that night, and torn by the finger-nails of His tormentors, and made foul with their spittle, which had flowed down upon it, and then became a hardened mass. See, too, how it hath been watered by that last fresh stream of blood mingled with brain, so that our Saviour's face was become so pitiable 208
an object, that man cannot even picture it to himself! Of a truth, we should pity even some brute beast, were we to see it treated thus. Hence our Lord saith to the soul, in the Canticle of Canticles: "Open to Me thy heart, My sister, My dove, My bride, and let My bitter Passion touch it; for My Head is full of the dew, and My hair with the dew-drops of the night, that is, of sins; for My Head is damp with blood, and this for thy sins."

Yet not even was all this blood-shedding enough for these cruel dogs, nor all this torture; no, nor even Christ's marvellous patience; none of these was enough to move them to compassion; but their mad hatred was still more inflamed with malice, so that they spat again on Christ's disfigured countenance, which they had so woefully ill-treated, and all the reproach, and contempt, and annoyance, and spurn, and slight, that they could conceive in their devilish hearts, all this they inflicted on this gentle Lamb. They wagged their heads, they gnashed with their teeth against Him in the very madness of their rage, as the prophet saith, for they knew not what affliction and pain, or what contempt they could heap upon Him. Their devilish heart was ever desirous of torturing Him more, nor could they glut 209

their thirst for His Blood with even torments such as these. Hence, again, they bent their knees to Him in mockery, and adored Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews."

Then, because Christ bore all this with marvellous patience, so as not even once to turn away His face from their blows and spittle, they were stirred up to such fury, that leaping from the ground, and seizing the reed out of His hand, they inflicted horrible blows upon His Head, whereby the points of the thorns were fixed deeper into His sacred brain, so that the pain of this reached even to His Heart, and His precious Blood flowed down abundantly over His dear face and neck. Yet all the while that innocent Lamb sat there full of love, and bore with exceeding patience all this utterly inhuman affliction and pain for our foul sins, for the glory of His Eternal Father. O ye proud, ye foul sinners, weigh well, I pray you, with yourselves, how great must have been your sins, that they had to be atoned for by such a chastisement, and by chastisement so exceeding great. Had not the Eternal Father been grievously offended, never would the Son of God have suffered thus. Had not your sins been clearly unto death, never would the Son of God have died to blot them out. Wherefore, let every sinner go down into his own heart, and there, with deep sighs and bitter tears, let him confess and acknowledge that he himself is the cause of these Christ's cruel torments. For 210
of a truth, as we have sinned, so Christ desired to suffer. It is because men take exceeding pains to adorn their heads in order to appear well-favoured before men, and because they take pride in this, that Christ Jesus was so fearfully tortured in His Head, so that He might atone for these sins of men.

He was clothed also in a purple or scarlet robe. Purple is the dye of fishes, which live in the dew of heaven, and it signifieth tenderness of heart, since this virtue sheweth a man's blood through all his veins, and gladdeneth and enlighteneth his heart, and setteth his spirit on fire with compassion and love. The man who is tender of heart swimmeth in the delights of grace, like a fish in water, and a tender heart liveth upon the dew of heaven, that is, on the inflowing of the Holy Ghost. All this, indeed, we can see in Christ. For during the time of His Passion He was young and beautiful, full of all grace and love, for He performed all His works out of a loving, glad, tender, and cheerful heart, to the glory of His Eternal Father; and He shed His precious Blood even to the last little drop, for the salvation of His creatures. And when the Jews could not kill this noble fish on that high and solemn feast-
day, the vestment of His Body was dyed in purple colour. Thus, too, in that He was clad in 211
a scarlet robe, that is, in a red garment, twice dyed with the blood of little worms, is shown forth to us His love, which addeth ornament to all virtues, and this we ought also to have for our chief and upper garment. And His garment was of two colours, and twice dyed, so as to unite us both to God and our neighbour by love, just as fire joineth to itself whatever it can burn, and transformeth it into its own likeness. Thus, also, every one who is humble and little in his own eyes, chooseth to be as a poor little worm, and burning with love towards his God, staineth his robe with scarlet, when for God's glory, and his neighbour's profit and

salvation, he wasteth his own blood. For the fiery love with which he burneth towards God, yearning to promote His highest honour, and to increase His praise, and his ardent desire to lead all men to the highest blessedness, whereby God may be praised by them for all eternity; these, I say, are so great and vehement in such a man, that they inwardly melt and consume him, and cause him to pour himself forth outwardly, so that he embraceth all men, especially those who are oppressed by misery or calamity, in such burning love and charity, that he would desire to suffer the torments of hell for all men, if this seemed good to God, 212
and could give Him honour; even as Moses, for the sake of the children of Israel, desired to be blotted out of the book of life, and as Paul desired to become an anathema for his brethren. Thus then did Christ. He humbled Himself in our nature beneath all men whatsoever; He called Himself not a man, but a worm, born of the clay of earth, in that He Himself had taken upon Him human nature, of that goodly earth, the Virgin Mary. Moreover, He took blood and marrow of bone out of love, in order that He might work the highest deeds of love for the glory of God His Father, and the salvation of all mankind. This was why Christ Jesus, the humble lover of souls, wore a bridal garment of purple and scarlet; namely, as a clear proof and sign of His unutterable tenderness and incomprehensible love. And on that day of His espousals, He wore a crown of green, adorned with red roses, that is, crimsoned by His own red Blood, for He would show to us that He is a tender and gentle King, and the true Prince of love.

213

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A prayer for enlightenment.

O Jesus, Mirror of eternal truth! Light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world; Light that shinest in the darkness; Light in which there is no darkness at all; Light to which no other light can add; Light before which every other light is as it were not; Light that givest increase to all light; Light from which all things receive light; Light that createst all light, preservest all light, rulest all light! O Light, which Tobias saw, when, with closed eyes, he taught his son the way of life! Light, which Isaac inwardly saw, when, with misty eyes, he told his son the things which were to be! Light, by which all the prophets were enlightened, that they might know the secret things which were to come to pass long afterwards, and prophecy of hidden sacraments and mysteries! Light, that saidst: “Let there be light, and there was light.” Behold! darkness covereth the face of my heart, so that I cannot see the light of heaven. Say, therefore, to my soul: “Let there be light, and there shall be light.” For straightway in glittering splendour there shall beam forth shining rays from Thee, the true and fontal light, into the abyss of my heart, into the depths of my soul, and my night shall be turned into clear day.

214

O Light above all understanding! So light me up with Thy brightness, that I may contemplate Thee, my God, in Thyself, and myself in Thee, and all things beneath Thyself. O Light that canst not deceive, and canst not be deceived, to Whom nothing is hid, to Whom alone the hearts of all the sons of men lie open and clear; enlighten, I beseech Thee, the secret recesses of my heart, that I may find out my secret sins, which lie hidden within them; and not those sins alone, which have been conceived of the enemy’s vicious seed, but also those propensities and hidden roots of the soul, which have generated within me, and caused to spring up anew the enemy’s hurtful seed, whereby Thy work in me is hindered and delayed, virtues are kept under, and the little garden of my heart, which is tilled for Thy consolation, is given up to shameful weeds, and becometh untilled and rough.

O most luminous Truth! who can rightly understand his own sins? Who can clearly discern what is pleasing or unpleasing to Thee, what is suggested by Thy Spirit, or advised by our own spirit of sensuality? Of a truth without Thee all things are vicious, frail, and unclean; without Thee, all is darkness to me; without Thee, there is for me no truth, no judgment, no knowledge, no discernment. As long as Thy light is absent, vanity seemeth to be truth, and wickedness justice, and vice virtue. For with my growth, ignorance hath grown; 215 my iniquities are multiplied more than the hairs of my head; 1 have tried to see, and could not. The mist of impure thoughts hath so darkened my heart, that I cannot gaze at the light of Thy grace. Blind, I am led down to hell. All! my God! grant that I may see; enlighten my inward eyes, lest ever I should sleep in death, and the enemy should say: “I have prevailed against him?” Tear asunder the great veil, which hath obtruded itself between Thee, my

God, and me, Thy servant. Open my blindfolded eyes, that I may know the way of truth, and keep to Thy sacred foot-prints. O Jesus, bright Sun of Justice, exceeding bright, enlighten me who sit in darkness, and who dwell in the shadow of death; direct my feet into the way of peace, by which I may come to the place of Thy wonderful tabernacle, to Thy great dwelling-place, with the prayer of compassion, and the song of rejoicing. O well-spring of exhaustless loving-kindness, from which flow all grace and goodness; let there flow forth, I beseech Thee, the rich dew of Thy bounty on my parched and withered soul, before it die; for my virtue is dried up like a potsherd. Help Thy wretched creature, that Thine Almighty Goodness hath made. O source of my being! Thou hast made me out of nothing, and behold I return into nothing, unless Thou govern and preserve me. When I had perished, Thou 216
didst redeem me; but again I perish, unless Thou succour me. For Thou art the Word of God, by Whom all things are made, and without Whom nothing is made, and behold! without Thee, I am nothing. O tender Jesus, Who shrinkest not from coming down from heaven, to build up again what had become ruined, come down even to my wretched soul, corrupted though it he, and dead in sins, that by Thee I may be born again. Without Thee we have no life in us. Let me hear Thy sweet voice, at which the dead come to life, and the wicked spirits are put to flight, and all sicknesses are healed, that my spirit also may be healed by Thee, and stirred up, and that it may rejoice with joy beyond all measure, in worthy praise and thanksgiving.

O, mirror of divine brightness, purify my inward eyes, that they may be male fit to contemplate Thee. For it was for this that Thy loving face was made foul with spittle and blood, and was buffeted and smitten. It was for this that Thou Thyself wert left without any beauty; because Thou wouldst cleanse the face of my heart, and make it pure from every stain in Thy precious Blood. It was for this, too, that T1iiae outward eyes were veiled and covered during Thy Passion, because Thou wouldst uncover the inward gaze of my under- 217
standing, and strip it naked of all distractions, and images, and multiplicity of objects, and of all that can come between Thee and it; so that with a naked understanding and a clear gaze, I might look on Thy eternal Godhead, and on Thee, the source of my being, and that I might ever have my spirit naked and uncovered, a living and brilliant mirror, as it were, wherein I might catch the outward likeness of Thy divine image; and that I might set no other object before the eye of my heart, than that bleeding Body of Thine, and Thy disfigured Face, and Thy thorn-crowned Head; and that at the same time, by means of this Thy pitiable and painful image, I might vigorously despise all pride and vanity of this world, and the applause and favour of men.

O most merciful God, grant me so much knowledge of Thyself as is necessary for me, in order to obtain a true love for Thee; for, indeed, I love Thee, and long more and more to

love Thee. Wound my heart with the dart of Thy love, and grant that I may love Thee with such ardour as that with which Thou wishest to be loved by me. For nothing is sweeter to me than to love Thee, my God; and nothing more bitter, than to be held back from and kept a stranger to Thy love by anything whatsoever. 218 For all that is beneath Thee is to me a cause of great want, and an affliction; nay more, it is a deadly enemy that desireth to tear me from Thy sweet and beloved Heart. Moreover; without Thee, I am a heavy cross to myself, and an intolerable hell.

O unquenchable fire of love, Thou love that ever burnest, and never canst be put out, set me also on fire, burn into my whole being, that in myself I may wholly fall away, and be wholly transformed by Thy love; melt my whole being, that I may wholly lose myself in Thee. Consume me wholly, O my God, in the fire of Thy burning love, that utterly forgetful of my own self and of all that is in the world, I may, with the arms of love, embrace Thee, the highest and most excellent Good. I pray Thee, Lord, by Thy loving-kindness, to graft me into Thyself, and unite me to Thee, that I may become one with Thee, and rest for ever in Thee, the one Eternal. Amen.

219

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Christ is shown to the people by the Governor, with the words: "*Behold the Man!*"

After that Jesus had been thus inhumanly treated, and all the poisonous malice of the Jews had been poured out upon Him, yet not even then did their raging madness and hatred wax cold, nor was their thirst of blood quenched. Not satisfied with having thus shamefully mocked and set at nought the Son of God in the sight of all who were in the judgment hall, they would have Him led out before the gaze of all the people, who, for fear of pollution, had not dared to enter in; for Pilate was a heathen and profane, and it was not lawful for the Jews to come under his roof. They were afraid of becoming polluted by entering into a heathen man's house, yet they had no fear of calling down Christ's innocent Blood upon themselves. They desired to eat the Paschal Lamb, yet they feared not unjustly to put the true Paschal Lamb to death. Pilate, therefore, brought forth Jesus in His cruel agony, and set Him before the gaze of that raging crowd, saying: "Behold the Man! Behold I lead Him forth to you." See how grievously He hath been treated, how fearfully He hath been scourged. 220

Let us now observe, and this with great compassion, how pitiably our Lord stood there, covered with a shameful garment that might well excite their laughter, His crown of thorns upon His Head, His sceptre a reed, His Wounds gaping, His limbs worn and wearied, His poor Body horrible to see, trembling with cold, and sledding large drops of blood. Let us look, too, with inward sorrow, on His loving face, on which the angels desire to gaze; how pitiably it is swollen from the cruel blows, how torn and scratched by the finger-nails of His tormenters, how stained and discoloured with mingled blood and brain, how foul with spittle, so that He hath almost lost the form of man. Oh! of a surety, he who is not moved by this, is harder than steel and adamant. When, then, Pilate had led Him forth before the people, he said: "*Ecce homo!*" "Behold the Man!"

This can be interpreted in divers ways. The Father of heaven lath indeed loved us from all eternity, and it is His will that we should give Him love for love, according to our poor measure. This is why He said to the soul of man: "Ecce homo. Behold the man." Look upon Him, that thou mayest be looked upon by Him; love, that thou mayest be loved; acknowledge Him, that He may acknowledge thee. "Behold My only-begotten One beareth fullest testimony of My love for thee, since I have given Him all for thee. Neither His Body, nor His soul, nor 221
His Blood, were so dear to Me, that I could hesitate to give Him for thy sake. Nay, if I could have found in My fatherly Heart anything better or more precious, that would I have given for thee. Behold the Man! In the manhood of My Son, I have given thee My most high Godhead, for He is one with Me, and in Me, one, same, true and undivided God, and whosoever receiveth Him, receiveth Me. I have given thee, moreover, My Holy Spirit, to cleanse, and comfort, and enlighten thee; to teach thee all truth and justice; to inflame thee with His

own love; to solace thee, and enrich thee with all graces and virtues. For I took exceeding great complacency in thee, and thou didst find favour in My eyes, and I set My Heart upon thee, and chose thee for My own beloved bride. And from everlasting had I decreed, that My delight and My pleasure should be in thee, even in thee whom I had chosen to be My temple, and My chamber, and My dwelling-place. Behold the Man! In Him have I given thee My whole undivided Self, that thou also mightest give to Me thy whole undivided self, all that thou art, and all that thou canst do. With the purest love have I embraced thee, without ever looking for any reward or compensation from thee. Wherefore it is just that thou in thy turn shouldst love Me without looking for any reward; that is, that thou shouldst 222 love Me for Myself alone, that I may be thy reward, thy hope, and thy aim, and that thou shouldst love Me, because I have loved thee, and that thou mayest deserve to be loved by Me. And if thou wilt enter with Me into a compact of love, and become worthy to be loved by Me, thou must be a willing and living instrument in My hands, and allow thyself to be led by Me; and thou must offer and resign thy whole self wholly to Me, without any wish or choice of thy own, and suffer whatever may seem good to Me to do with thee both in time and in eternity. Yes, I say, it is thus absolutely necessary that thou shouldst leave Me to work in thee, and leave thyself to suffer, and to forego, and that thou shouldst ask of Me to accomplish in thee all that from everlasting I have decreed and fore-ordained, denying thyself utterly, and giving Me all power to work in thee. And with entire trust in My goodness, thou must cling to Me, receiving with great gratitude from My hand all that I shall permit to happen unto thee, both adversity and prosperity, temptations, afflictions, abandonment, distress; trusting that in My lovingkindness I send thee these things, as being the best, and most healthful, and useful for thee, and in these must thou exercise thyself. But if thou art stable in thyself, and persevere, and look into the depths of thy soul, thou wilt clearly see 223 why I have suffered these things to happen to thee, and that they are most necessary for thee, and for thine own interest. But, above all, I wish thee to take care, lest thou resist My workings within thee by obstinacy, self-seeking, wandering thoughts, negligence and dissipation. But in whatever affliction, distress or abandonment, I may suffer to come upon thee, thou shalt desire to persevere therein just as long as shall seem good to Me, until I loosen and snatch thee therefrom, and set thee free; and thou shalt bear that cross even unto the end for My sake. It behoveth thee, indeed, to be thus shaken and tossed by temptations and troubles, until every straw of lust, or selfishness, or vicious propensity be -blown away from thee, and thy soul, which is so proud and stiff, must be ground by these things as if by a mill-stone, until thou, in thine own eyes, art brought down to nothing, like dust and ashes, so as not only to acknowledge, but to feel that thou art the most wretched and vilest of all whom the world containeth. And thou must be so stripped of all will and choice of thy own, that whatever God shall do with thee and with all creatures, may be so pleasing to thee, that thou mayest not even desire it to be otherwise, even if all creatures and all the elements were 224

subject to thy rule. But before this state can be reached, there is work for thee to do, and toil for thee to bear; and to obtain all this many will be the crosses and labours, yea, and spiritual deaths, which thou wilt have to undergo. For before it can bring forth the fruit, the grain of wheat must die in the earth. Of a truth, these are the two wings; exceeding trustworthy, which summarily and swiftly lift us to the spiritual life; that is to say, self denial and patient suffering of adversity; in two words, self-denial and suffering. For whosoever knoweth how to resign himself to God in all simplicity, to him no affliction, nor infirmity, nor adversity can happen at all, without turning to an increase of virtue. This is that to which the apostle beareth witness, when he saith: "We know that to them who love God all things work together for good."

Therefore, if a man bear all things equally, and from all that happeneth to him gather matter for self-exercise, and if he carefully look into the depth of his own heart, he will hear the Father's voice speaking to him inwardly, and saying: "Ecce homo!" "Behold the Man!" Know thyself, know what thou art; acknowledge thy too great want of mortification, and the manifold vices that lie hidden in the depth of thy soul; take good heed that thou art
nothing, that thou hast nothing, that thou canst do nothing of thyself. Suffer Me, then, to 225
work within thee. Cleave unto Me by love, serve Me by faith, and whatever thou canst not do by thine own power I will do it for thee. In this knowledge, therefore, such a man will exercise himself, and when all his defects and crosses have been taken away, he will go with them to God, and give Him thanks, for thus having caused him to know his own vileness; and he will answer God, and will say in his turn, "Ecce homo!" Behold the man!" Behold, O my God, I am wretched and fit for nothing, and weak, and powerless; I have been conceived in sin, born in misery, and brought up in vice. Against whom, O Lord, dost Thou put forth Thy power? "*Ecce homo!*" "Behold the man." Be not angry with the leaf that is carried away by the wind. Forget not, O tender Lord, my poverty and frailty, and take not away from me the help of Thy grace, for I am a man, and a frail potsherd; I am a worm, and no man, full of the uncleanness of the flesh, from which filth and dirt run down both within and without. The power of resistance hath gone from me, and already I am overcome. Have mercy on me, O Thou, my God! Fight for me, work in me, do unto me what Thou wilt. Behold! I resign my whole self to Thee. For I know that Thy nature is goodness, and that it belongeth
to Thee to have mercy and to spare. All my malice I cast into Thine infinite goodness. Thou 226
hast granted unto me to know my sins, O Lord, grant that I may overcome them. Tear up by the roots all uncleanness of sin, and whatever is displeasing to Thee, and again plant in me Thy divine love, and all virtues.

Lastly, by this acknowledgment of his own frailty, and by the contemplation of his own vices, a man will very often make greater progress, if he only exercise himself well therein, than if in the meanwhile he had exercised himself in other things, however high. Of a truth, if a man is to be thoroughly cleansed, the vices which lie hidden in him must be brought to

light, and he himself must sit with holy Job on the dung-hill and filth of his own vices, and this, too, with much sorrow and anguish, scraping off the gore and unclean matter of his wounds with a potsherd; that is to say, wiping away with labour and pain the impure flux of thoughts that spring from his sensual and corrupt nature. And he must place his exercise in this, so that with grievous toil he may cultivate the field of his conscience, if one day he would have it yield pleasant fruit. Now he must exercise himself in these things for a while, and many times must he die to these vices, and conquer them, and go with them to God, and throw all his sins and faults many times into God's Wounds, and wash them therein, 227
and burn them away in the flame of God's love, until he feel that they have gone utterly from him, and that he hath been freed from them by God.

Moreover, this word, "*Ecce homo*," may be taken in this sense, as if, namely, the Son Himself were to say: "Ecce homo*:*" "Behold, O man." Behold what I have done for thee; I have known thee from everlasting in My essence, for from everlasting hast thou been in Me, sharing My being according to the idea of My Eternal Mind. Besides, I made thee a creature, and embraced thee with such high love, and endowed thee with such excellent grace, that I created thee to My own image and likeness. And that thou mightest know how goodly and fair I made thee, I shrunk not from taking thy nature, and from stamping on it the image of My worshipful Godhead. I was made thy own flesh and blood that I might redeem thee. I created My soul with all its powers, and I filled it with all spiritual gifts and graces, that I might perfectly practise all virtues, that I might satisfy for thy sins, and that I might merit and obtain for thee life everlasting. "*Ecce homo*." I, Who before all ages was born of the divine womb of My Eternal Father, in a certain marvellous and unutterable way, ever abiding equal with the same Father in power and glory, thought it no lowering of Myself to take thy nature, 228
and to be made thy servant for three and thirty years, and in much poverty and lowliness and affliction, to work thy salvation. I was made, too, an exile from Mine own kingdom, that thou mightest become its heir. I was made an enemy of My Father, and was forsaken and chastened by Him with cruel chastisement, and I suffered His anger to be cast on Me, that thou mightest find grace, and be made the friend and child of God. Lastly, I took all thy debt upon Me, and I, Who was thy Judge, and Who by right could have sentenced thee to eternal damnation, was so touched with mercy, that under the appearance of a guilty sinner I gladly gave Myself over to a shameful death for thy sins, and spent My whole Self even to the last little drop of blood. Moreover, out of pure love, I gave thee My very Heart's Blood to drink: I became a worm, and no man, mocked and scoffed at by all, the reproach of men, and the hated sickening outcast of the people. As the fruit of the vine was I pressed in the wine-press of My Passion. My strength withered up like a potsherd, and was dried by the fire of love; and even as snow melteth when the sun looketh down, so in My Father's sight was I exhausted, and consumed, and melted for the sake of thy salvation. "*Ecce homo*."
"Behold the Man!" What more wilt thou that I should do for thee? How could I have shown 229

thee greater faithfulness, greater good-will, greater loving-kindness? See, how I stand here disfigured for thy sins; how I, the Lord of lords, am forsaken from on high, and from below, and despised by all. See how the torment of those thorns has pressed into the marrow of My Heart, that I may pick out the thorns and sharp points of thy sins. From the top of My Head to the sole of My feet, I am but one gaping, bleeding Wound, that I may perfectly heal thee of every hurt. All the evil that thou hast deserved by following the desires of thy nature, all that I have washed away in such great and sharp bitterness of pain; and I have so cleansed thee wholly from every stain of sin in My precious Blood, that thou mightest become pleasing and acceptable in My sight. "*Ecce homo*:" "Behold the Man." Keep for ever in thy mind the remembrance of this love, and with what zeal, and labour, and sorrow, I sought after thee, and be not after this a stranger to Me. See if there can be any sorrow that can be compared with My sorrow! See if ever any guilty wretch suffered such pain for his own sins, as I have suffered for thine!

From these words, too, Holy Church, our Mother, hath deemed that the Sacred Host 230
should be elevated and shown to all, as if to speak to us, and say: "*Ecce homo*!" "Behold the Man;" in order to stir us up, the good Mother that she is, to bear ever in mind the Incarnation, Nativity, Passion,. Death, and Resurrection, and, in a word, all the love and all the benefits shown and conferred upon us by Christ; for the Holy Thing, that is the Mass, hath been instituted in remembrance of God's love, and of the works which for our sakes He hath accomplished. For the same reason it hath been decreed, that there should be placed in all the churches the mirror of truth, that is, the image of the Holy Cross of Christ Jesus; so that as often as he crosseth the threshold of the temple, man may contemplate the figure of his Maker hanging upon the Cross; and that straightway there may come into his mind that wonderful love, which his God then declared to him; and that he may so exercise and occupy himself therein, as to forget all strange and outward images, and may imagine that his crucified Lord is addressing him in these words: "Ecce homo:" "Behold the man." Behold how I hang here, despised, mocked, wracked, fastened with nails, wounded, deprived of all comfort, My arms naked and stretched out towards thee, to take thee back into My grace. Behold how I hang here, with My Head bowed down, that I may give thee the kiss of peace
and reconciliation; with My side and Heart open, that I may bring thee, My chosen bride, 231
into the pleasant chamber of My Heart, and there embrace thee with love everlasting. Then man, in his turn, as if accepting Christ's loving invitation to approach His sweet Wounds, turneth himself, full of confidence, to God, and to Christ's nailed and pierced feet, and throwing himself down with as lowly submission as he can, thinketh how he himself hath inflicted, by his foul sins, all this bitter sorrow on his Lord and God, and at the same time confesseth all his sins with bitter sorrow and burning tears, saying: "Enter not now, O most merciful God, into judgment with Thy useless and sinful servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." If in Thy angels evil was found, how much more unclean will man

be, who was conceived in concupiscence, and born in sin? Lord, correct me not in Thine anger, for I am not spirit, but flesh; not an angel, but a man. "Behold the Man." What is man, Lord God, that Thine anger should rage against him, whose life is like the wind or the smoke, which quickly passeth away? Why dost Thou show Thy power against the leaf, which is carried away by the wind? Then, too, at the same time, with all his weakness and all Ills sins, man turneth to God, and saith: "I know, O God of mercies, that Thou madest me pure and exceeding fit for no other end than that I might serve Thee, love Thee, praise and give 232
Thee thanks, and that I might be an obedient instrument in all things, whereby Thou mightest work according to the desire of Thy Heart, in all delight and without hindrance. But alas! I have been corrupted and made foul by sin; I have utterly destroyed Thy noble instrument, and rendered it unfit for use, so that I am unworthy that Thou shouldst work in me at all. For by sin I have been made wholly useless, and corrupt, and hateful; nor do I know if I deserve ought else, than that Thou shouldst take away from me all Thy grace, and cast me off from Thy face. But, O most merciful God! while I thus wait for Thy tender long-suffering, and Thy long-suffering tenderness, wherein Thou hast borne so patiently all the wrong, and contempt, and shame that I have inflicted on Thee, I here call to mind that it is not Thy will that any man should perish, and that Thou desirest not the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness, and live. Trusting then to this, I turn to Thee.

"O sweet Lord Jesus Christ, Who, by the will of the Father, and the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, didst renew our too corrupted nature, and restore it to its first purity, so that 233
by Thee far greater grace and glory have been born to us, than we lost by our first parents: Behold, I desire so to offer myself as an instrument in Thy hands, whereby Thou mayest work in me according to the desire of Thy Heart, as no creature hath ever offered itself before. But, O tender God, this is not in my power, for by a long habit of sin I have utterly corrupted myself. But whatever I may now be, I offer myself to Thee. If Thou hast renewed the whole world by Thyself, surely Thou art able to form me again to that purity, in which I was created by Thee. Thou art able out of a stone to raise up a child of Abraham. Vouchsafe, therefore, by Thy divine Mystery, to form and make over again all that by my own wickedness I have destroyed."

Thirdly, the word "*Ecce homo*" may be literally understood, as if Pilate, when he said to the Jewish multitude: "*Ecce homo*," "Behold the man," meant to address them in these words: "Behold the man.—Now let your blood-thirstiness be quenched, let this now be enough for you; cease now to persecute any more the innocent blood. For, contrary to right and justice, contrary to my mind and conscience, I have fearfully chastised this innocent man, in order to appease your mad rage. Let tills be enough for you, and now show some kindness to this man, who hath deserved no evil. For he is a man. Have compassion on your own flesh and blood, and on one of your own race; let your cruel tyranny be turned into mercy, your hatred 234

into love; have pity upon Him in His cruel punishments, which you see have been inflicted upon Him. He is no beast, but a man. No robber or malefactor was ever so brought down to nothing, or so unworthily punished for his crimes, as this Just Man, Who hath done no wrong. If ye despised Him because He said He was a king, now, at least, receive Him Whom you see the most wretched and abject of men."

When, then, the cruel Jews heard these words, and saw Jesus thus disfigured standing before them, their hearts of steel, far from being softened, began rather to glow with a white heat of hatred and envy, so that they cried out savagely: "Away with Him, away with Him!" "We cannot even look upon Him!" "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" "We will have no more excuses: He is guilty of death." When Pilate saw that he could do no good, and that he was powerless either by word or deed to set Jesus free, and that the rage and madness of the Jews increased more and more, he washed his hands before all the wicked people, and said: "I am guiltless of the innocent blood of this Just Man. See ye to it." But they with discordant and horrible cries, cried out: "His Blood be upon us, and upon our children." O unheard of malice! O accursed hatred! 235

Here let each man enter into the secret places of his heart, and there meditate with himself with what sorrow the Heart of Jesus was pierced at these words, since He clearly saw that they had been uttered by the Jews out of envy and malice. Let us consider how heavy an affliction it was to our tender-hearted Lord, Whose nature is goodness, when He looked into the deceitful and plague-stricken hearts of His people, and beheld with what cruelty and hatred they were consumed, how they thirsted for His Blood, so as even to give themselves and their children over to eternal malediction, and the terrible vengeance of God, if only they could put Christ to death. How sadly, peradventure, did our Lord think within His Heart: "O My people, what have I done to you, or how have I grieved you? I chose you from out the nations, and highly exalted you. With fatherly love I kept and cherished you, and I filled you with all good things, and now you seek to kill and crucify Me."

After this, Pilate passed sentence upon Christ, and gave Him into the hands of the Jews, that they might crucify Him, and put Him to death according to their desire. Ah! where is the man whose heart will not tremble with horror, and who will not break forth into tears, when he seeth the Author of life sentenced to death? 236 the Son of God, to Whom the Father hath given all judgment, suffering Himself, of His own free will, to be condemned to a shameful death? Oh! who can refrain from tears, when he calleth to mind how his dear Lord, the innocent Lamb, was delivered into the cruel hands of the Jews, that they might fulfil their designs upon Him? What will they now do, when they have obtained the judge's consent, who dared to do so much without the governor's leave? Will they not pour out upon Christ the rage which they have so long borne in their hearts? Of a truth, whatever evil they could think of, that they inflicted upon Him. By the most bitter, shameful, cruel and contemptible death they can think of, will they kill Him; for He hath given Himself over to their will. O

wicked judgment! O unjust sentence! O cruel condemnation! O perverse judge, a little while
ago thou didst find no cause in Him, and now thou sentencest Him to death. A little before
thou didst declare Him a just man, and now thou condemnest Him to die. A little before
thou didst confess that thou knewest well that the Jews had been moved by hatred and envy
to deliver Him to you, and that there was no fault at all in Him, and now thou givest Him 237
over into the hands of His enemies, and to their cruel will!

THE TWENTY-NINTH CHAPTER.

The burden of the Cross is laid on Jesus.

Nowter that Christ Jesus, our Saviour, had been condemned to death, the soldiers again seized Him, and stripping Him of the purple garment, clothed Him once more in His own garments, that He might be the better recognised in His own dress. Then they hurried Him along to death, for they feared that Pilate might be otherwise persuaded, or repent, and thus recall his sentence. They took, therefore, the heavy beam of the Holy Cross, and laid it upon His sacred shoulders, and its length, as some have observed, was fifteen feet. Moreover, the reason why they did this was, because at that time the cross was the most shameful kind of torment by which the guilty could be put to death. For this reason no one would touch it for fear of confusion and shame. Thus, then, they laid it on Christ, to His great confusion, that He might bear His own shame, and might be an object of mockery and scorn to all men, and that the remembrance of Him might be utterly blotted out of the 238
hearts of men, and that no one might ever dare to make mention of Him again. But our most gracious Lord willingly and gently took its weight upon Him, and carried it with great love for His Father's glory and the salvation of men; nor did He take upon Himself the Cross alone, but the sins of the whole world, and He carried it to Calvary, where He fastened them to the Cross, and destroyed them, and washed them away in His own Blood, and atoned for them by His bitter death. This is what the Prophet saith: "All we like sheep have gone astray, every man into his own way;" that is, after his own lusts and delights; "and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Moreover, in doing this, our Lord showed unto us a certain example of perfection, as before He had taught us by word, for He utterly denied and resigned Himself, and bore His Cross with constancy and perseverance. If, then, thou wouldst become His disciple, go and do likewise, and follow thy Lord. Yet it was not enough for the Jews to have thus shamefully treated Him, for, to shame Him the more, they led Him along between two thieves, and showed Him far greater contempt than they showed to them, by forcing Him to carry His Cross,—a thing which was never heard to have been done to thieves. O most loving Jesus! 239
what love hath overcome Thee? How exceedingly hast Thou thirsted after my salvation! With what strong desire hast Thou walked along that difficult and painful way for my sake, and suffered such great shame and reproach for the love of me. To call me back to life, Thou, the Author of life, wert led to death! To bring us back out of the path of wickedness, Thou, the Lord of Sabaoth, the Lord holy and just, art dragged to Calvary. To teach us to despise the good things of earth, Thou hast suffered Thyself to be despoiled of all things, and naked hast gone up to the Cross to Thy Father. To plant us among the angelic choirs, and to join us thereto, Thou hast been numbered with the wicked; and lastly, that we might be honoured by the hosts of heaven, Thou art held up before the whole world to contempt and scorn. Of

a truth, no malefactor ever died by a more shameful death. For, at the time when Christ suffered, the Pasch was being celebrated by the Jews, and a great multitude of people had come together, and all strove one with the other to obtain a sight of Christ. Thus, then, the Lord of glory, Whose is all glory and honour, walked along, crowned with thorns, bound with hard cords, heavy laden with the weight of the Cross, between two thieves, and mocked by every sign of condemnation, of which those wicked men could think. 240

Let us contemplate, I pray of you, with sorrowful hearts, how full of agony was that procession. Before our Lord went the vile crowd, laughing and grinning, desiring to be beforehand with Him, in order to see Him fastened to the Cross. On either side walked the torturers and executioners, afflicting Him at every step in numberless ways, in order to allure and excite the whole people to mock and ill-treat Him. Behind followed the cruel crowd of armed men, and, as we may suppose, the leaders and chief-priests, rejoicing like lions when they have captured their prey, and these heaped upon Christ curses and blasphemies. Thus, then, was the King of glory made the contempt of all; small and great, noble and base-born, shamefully ill-treated Him. This our Lord had long before foretold by the Prophet, in these words: “They who sat in the gate spoke against Me, and they who drank wine held me up to scorn. All who saw Me, mocked Me; they spoke with their lips, and wagged their heads.”

Let us, then, with inward sorrow, look closely into the torments which our Lord now suffered. Although, as Isaias saith, He was full of wounds, and from the sole of the foot to the top of the head there was no health in Him, yet it hath been observed by some, that He 241
was again grievously hurt and wounded in His shoulder. For upon it pressed the great beam of the Cross, which inflicted on it a large wound, making of all the wounds one wound; and the pain thereof pierced His tender Heart. And as some devout doctors teach, this was one of the most grievous of Christ’s pains. For, as we learn by daily experience, if a man be in pain from even some slight wound or ulcer, he can hardly suffer with patience anyone to come near him. What then must have been the torment of our Lord Jesus Christ, when that heavy wood was laid and pressed down upon His bleeding shoulders, and chiefly upon that fearful wound; and He had to carry it so long a journey? And because the Cross was too long, He could not carry it all upon His shoulder. Hence it happened, that the end of it, striking against the stones strewn upon the way, made a great and harsh noise, which must have been painful to our Lord beyond all belief. Moreover, as by reason of all those grievous pains and troubles which He had borne all that night and day, He was so weak and injured as to be wholly exhausted and devoid of strength, He walked along so pitiably bowed down 242
to the earth beneath the great weight of the Cross, and with such exceeding agony of heart that every step He took eat, so to speak, into His very Heart. But His burning love for us and our salvation kept urging Him on to suffer beyond His strength. And of a truth, beyond measure grievous was that affliction, both inwardly and outwardly, when He had taken on Himself not only the burden of the Cross, but the sins of the whole world, as the prince of

the apostles saith: "He hath borne our sins in His own Body on the tree." Nor could Christ's Passion be anything but exceeding bitter, since, according to the rigour of justice, it was to outweigh all the sins of men. Here let every man think in his own heart, how much heavier he himself hath made the Cross of Christ by his own sins.

After this, when those bloodthirsty dogs would hasten Christ's death, they both kicked and struck Him, and without any mercy showered down blows upon Him, as if He had been some brute beast in their hands. Nevertheless, this innocent Lamb meekly placed Himself under all their savage blows. Who then can restrain his tears, if he set Christ thus disfigured before the eyes of his soul, and with great compassion consider His pains? For, of a truth, His Body was utterly exhausted, and yet carried a Heart to suffer. His limbs sank down under His burden, yet when He fell down burning love raised Him up, that He might bear His punishment even to the end. The heavy weight of the Cross pressed Him down to the earth, 243
yet His fiery longing urged Him to go on. For His eager desire to accomplish His Father's will, and to finish our redemption, had so increased within Him, that it compelled Him to suffer more than His nature and human weakness could bear, and so forced Him through all His pains, that He would not have refused to walk under this heavy burden, even to the last judgment day, for man's salvation, if this had seemed good to His Father, and had been to His honour.

Here, therefore, Christ setteth before all men a mirror, as it were, and form of spiritual life and perfection. For as many as aspire to a true and virtuous life, these must gladly take up their cross with Christ, and faithfully and perseveringly carry the same; and if it shall please God, they must suffer themselves to be stripped naked of all temporal goods, and of all help and comfort of friends, and of inward and spiritual consolation and sensible grace. For this they must cheerfully suffer mockery, and shame, and detraction, and wrong, and reproach, for God's dear sake; and with Christ they must be made a sacrifice pleasing unto God, and like unto their Beloved, by bearing many afflictions and troubles at the hands of men, and temptations of devils, and their own faults and defects. And whosoever desireth 244
to be a true lover, must never forsake his Beloved, either on the cross, or in death, or any affliction whatsoever, that can come upon him; but taking his cross earnestly on his shoulders, he must humbly place himself beneath it, and say: "I will follow Thee, O my Beloved, whithersoever Thou shalt go." Nor must he ask to be loosened from the cross, but must desire to bear it, as it shall seem good to his Lord. Nor must he seek any consolation, either earthly or spiritual, which may soften or lessen his cross. Nay, rather, for the glory of his Beloved, he must be ready to bear it even to his last breath; nor must he seek any other reward for this, but only God's honour and His good pleasure.

Lastly, those who thus carry their cross, these I call the true lovers and followers of Christ, for they seek not their own, but the things of Jesus Christ; even as S. Paul, that faithful lover of Christ, after those fearful and cruel crosses of which he maketh mention in

his epistle, still desired to be an anathema for his brethren, the children of Israel; that is, to become accursed and separated from God, if only he could gain many to Christ. Moses, in like manner, desired to be blotted out of the book of life. Of a truth this is perfect charity, which seeketh not its own, spareth not itself, neither in time nor in eternity, if only God's 245
honour be increased. They are true lovers and followers of Christ, who repay Christ in some manner for His Death, by exposing their lives to danger, even as Christ laid down His life for them, and who desire their own loss, if they may gain Christ. Nor do such men despise anyone, but themselves rejoice to be despised; they magnify others and think them saints, but think little of themselves, and hold themselves as nothing-worth. These show themselves kind and gracious to all men, rigid and severe only to themselves. From others' evils they draw forth virtues, and their own virtues they hold for sins, and all others compared with their own sinful selves they earnestly judge to be just and virtuous. Who can hesitate to call such men humble, and lovers and followers of Christ, since they have utterly denied themselves, and follow Christ with His Cross?

Nevertheless it is not enough, if thou wouldst perfectly please thy bridegroom Christ, merely to have taken up thy cross. If thou wouldst be made in any way like to Him, thou must also go forth with Him. For thus thou readest of thy Lord in the Gospel, that He went forth carrying His Cross. And to the virgins in the Gospel it is said: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him." Whither, then, shall we go out? Out of the city, out of the 246
crowd of men, out of all tumult and disturbance; yea, and so utterly out of our own selves, out of all selfishness, sensuality, pleasure, comfort; out of all unlawful love of creatures, and all that can stain our hearts; and lastly, out of all things in which we seek ourselves more than God's simple honour, love and pleasure. Moreover, when we have thus gone out, we will then faithfully take our cross upon our shoulders, and keep close to Christ's footprints; that is to say, we will gladly accept all afflictions and crosses whatsoever, whenever they come to us by God's permission, and whencesoever they may come, whether from the evil spirit, or from our own faults and defects; and will lift them on our shoulders, that is, we will exercise ourselves therein; and so, at last, they will turn to our advantage.

But come now, and let us go back to Christ where we left Him; in the bloody hands, namely, of the cruel Jews. While Christ was walking along full of misery, under the heavy burden of the Cross, there were a few devout persons, chiefly certain women, who were deeply moved by compassion for their Saviour, and wept exceeding bitterly. To these our Lord said: "Weep not for Me, ye daughters of Jerusalem, but weep for yourselves, and for your children;" as if He would say: "I indeed stand in no need of your prayers, for of My 247
own will I suffer this shameful Death, both for My Father's glory and the salvation of all of you, and for all your sins and wickedness. It is not Me, therefore, Whom you should weep for, but weep rather for your own sins and those of your children, which cause Me all these pains. For it is your sins, and the contempt which I perceive My Father receiveth from you,

which weigh Me down far more heavily than the Cross which I bear. And soon My pain will pass away, but yours will endure for ever. For if your children do this in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? If I, Who never committed any sin, but am ever green, and fruitful of all virtue, cannot, nevertheless, pass away out of this world without the fire of trouble and affliction, and the bitterness of suffering, what will be the fire, and flames, and the torments of hell, which thou must look for, who are dry and barren of good works, empty of virtue, and full of wickedness?" Here, S. Gregory truly saith: "When I weigh with myself the Passion and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ, when I consider, too, the afflictions of Job, and the martyrdom of S. John the Baptist, my heart shrinketh for fear of the punishment prepared for sinners and all wicked men For if God chastised so terribly His own dearest friends, what will He do to His enemies? If He thus punished their exceeding slight 248
faults, without which this life can hardly be passed, what will be the severity with which He will punish those who, like senseless and thoughtless cattle, live according to the lusts of their own corrupt flesh?"

THE THIRTIETH CHAPTER.

Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, followeth her sorrowing Son.

While these things were being done, Mary, God's most sorrowful Mother, eagerly sought to see her Son, that she might receive from Him at least one word of comfort, or might herself solace Him in some way, and bid Him a last farewell. But, because she was not allowed to go near Him, by reason of the crowd of wicked soldiers, who surrounded Him on every side, and followed Him, she went round by another way, as some affirm, so as to get before the crowd, and thus meet her Beloved Son. For although from her bitter grief for her Son's Passion, she was utterly exhausted, and without strength, yet her mighty and burning love for Him, and her great desire of seeing Him, gave her fresh strength, so 249
that she passed before the whole crowd of those who were leading Jesus. Who, I ask, can conceive what must have been the agony of sorrow which then pierced her heart, when she saw her heart's only joy, Whom she embraced with love beyond all comprehension, so miserably forsaken, and bent down besides, beneath the heavy burden of the Cross; when she looked, too, on His gracious face, that so often she had kissed with inward devotion, so shamefully disfigured, and miserably treated; when she beheld His worshipful Head, that she had times without number pressed with reverence and burning love to her heart, so cruelly pierced by the dreadful crown of thorns; when, in a word, she saw such wrong and contempt inflicted on her God and Lord, and Himself numbered with condemned thieves? Who can doubt that the sword of sorrow most sharply pierced her devout and tender heart, when she saw her Beloved Son, Whom she had carried on her breast, so foul with blood and spittle, so buffeted and smitten, so disfigured, as well as despised and cast off by the whole world? There is no doubt at all, that if she had not been kept and strengthened by God's goodness, her heart would have broken for sorrow, for the measureless force of sorrow had so weighed down her spirit, that she stood as if overwhelmed by some heavy rock, and could 250
not utter even a word. Yet she manifested no unwonted disfigurement, nor showed outwardly any sign of impatience; for she had resigned herself utterly to God, and had poured and brought back her whole being, without any choice or will of her own, into His most gracious will. And because she was full of the Holy Ghost, she had known from the prophets that her Son was to die, and that it was for this that He had taken a mortal body, and that so it had seemed good to His Heavenly Father. Therefore it was that she knew not how to desire anything else. Hence, even as Christ Jesus gladly offered Himself to the Father a living Victim for the salvation of men, so also the most blessed Virgin Mary offered her own Son for the salvation of the human race; and it was far more pleasing to her to be deprived of His consolation, than to hinder man's redemption. But her burning love for her Son could not keep

itself wholly within, but as it inwardly burned, consumed, and melted her heart, so also it outwardly poured forth bitter tears, and darkened her fresh colour, and pressed out numberless deep sighs, so that her outward, pitiable, and most sad appearance, showed forth the inward anguish of her spirit. 251 But because she understood that it was God's will that she should suffer together with her Son, she gladly offered herself for this, for she was ready, indeed, to die with her sweet Son Jesus, for the salvation and redemption of wretched man. Moreover, she kept back her sorrow within the secret places of her heart, because she desired no outward comfort from men, seeking rather to abide in that sorrow, until our Lord Himself delivered her therefrom, and consoled her.

For this reason she followed Jesus, that with Him she might carry her cross. For this she went up to Calvary, that with Him she might be crucified inwardly in spirit. For this she stood by the Cross, that the sword of sorrow might pierce her Heart, and make her the Queen of all martyrs. For the most excellent gift of God, by which He is wont to reward His friends, is the cross, together with affliction, and this gift He bestowed on His Son and the Blessed Virgin, and still bestoweth on all His chosen friends. Hence, whosoever setteth himself against the cross and afflictions, resisteth God's will and God's gifts, and wandereth away from God, and turneth his back upon Him. For with a common love God loveth all men, and desireth them to advance towards perfection; but this cannot be without labour, and sorrow, and many crosses: just as some precious and cunningly worked vase of gold cannot be made without fire, and hammers, and other sharp and suitable instruments. 252 Yet wretched men always fly away, nor can they bear or tolerate Christ's gentle workmanship within them, and this is why they always remain fit for nothing, wretched and frail.

Then, when Christ, as we have said, thus walked along pitiably laden with His Cross, and when all His strength was gone, and He was utterly exhausted, so that He could go no further, in His exceeding pain He fell down flat upon the ground. At this fall He felt all at one time the fearful want of mercy shown by those cruel wretches, as they smote, and dragged, and forced Him along, as every man may easily weigh and meditate in his own mind. For they did to Him all the devil inwardly suggested. Moreover, when those wicked and blood-thirsty tyrants saw that neither by striking, nor dragging, nor forcing, nor kicking, they could move Him any farther,—so utterly was He without strength,—they compelled a certain man, going into the city, to carry the Cross after Christ. Now this they did, not from any compassion for Christ, but that they might the more quickly put Him to death; and lest, peradventure, He might break forth His soul under their hands, before they had put forth all their malice and wickedness against Him. Now this man was a heathen, that thereby might be given to understand that the Jews were unworthy to carry Christ's Cross; 253 and, at the same time, this mystery signified that the faith and glory of the Cross would pass to the Gentiles.

THE THIRTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

A Prayer to the Father of Heaven.

Look now, I beseech Thee, O most merciful Father, on Thine Only-begotten Son, and see how He hath suffered for Thy glory in the work of our redemption. See how the Only One of Thy love, equal to Thee in glory, equal in power, hath been disgraced between two thieves, and condemned to the shameful death of the Cross. Look upon His persevering obedience and patience, how with longing desire He hath borne for Thy honour all these pains, and all this bitterness, and contempt, and shame, and wrong, and all His horrible torments; and how He hath exhausted and spent Himself beyond His human strength, with true resignation, and without any help from others, in order that He might accomplish Thy
gracious will. This is Thy Beloved Son, in Whom Thou art well pleased. This is that true 254
Jacob, Who, suffering persecution from Esau, the Jewish people, hath walked humbly through the Jordan alone, with the weight of His Cross, that He might come back again to Thee with great riches, and an exceeding multitude of men. This is that true Joseph, Thy dearest Son, sent by Thee in search of His brethren, whom He found in Dothaim, that is, in the midst of great sin and iniquity, but who was devoured by an evil beast, that is to say, by the pestilential poison of envy. This is Jesus, the good Shepherd, Who laid down His life for His sheep, and sought everywhere so earnestly for the one sheep that was lost, and Who, when He had found it, after exceeding labour, and drawn it out, and led it away from the filth of sin, laid it so lovingly on His shoulders, and brought it back to the sheep-fold.

O Father of Mercies! see, I beseech Thee, how Thy sweet Son hath borne alone on His Cross the sins of the whole world; and how He Who never sinned, washed away all our filth and uncleanness in His own most pure Blood, and consumed them in the heat of His burning love. He Whom Thou hadst appointed Judge, and to Whom Thou hadst given all power of judgment, out of His love hath been sentenced to death, and hath died, in order
that He might redeem all who were guilty, and free them from their debts by paying the 255
price of His own innocent Blood.

O Father of heaven, how brightly doth Thy divine image shine forth in Thy most holy Son? How easy is it to know, through Thy Divine Word, Thy tender and Fatherly Heart? Now clearly do we acknowledge, that whosoever seeth Thy Son, seeth Thee also, and by the mercy of Thy beloved Son, we do indeed understand how Thou art the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation. See, most sweet Father, here is Thy obedient Son, Who so thirsted after Thine honour, that out of zeal and love for Thy house, He wasted His Heart's blood, and the marrow of His bones, and was dried up like a potsherd, in order that He might lead all men along with Him to Thee, and that they might love, and thank, and praise Thee for ever. Ah! what am I, a poor little worm of earth, that for my sake Thou sparedst not Thine only-begotten Son? How hast Thou loved me, whom Thou hast redeemed at such

a price! And, of a truth, if Thy Fatherly Heart could have thought of anything better, this, too, would have been given as the price of my salvation, and for the perfecting thereof. What shall I render Thee, O most holy Father, for all this Fatherly trust, and kindness, and love, which Thou hast shown me through Thy Only-begotten Son? Of a truth, if for Thy love my heart could be divided, at every single moment of time, into as many little parts as there are 256 little blades of grass on the earth, or drops of water in the sea, or particles of dust and sand on the mountains and in the valleys; and if each single part could ceaselessly praise Thee with a exceeding great gratitude, and serve and wait on Thee as diligently, and obey Thee as simply, and venerate and worship Thee as worthily, and love Thee with as great detachment, as even lieth within the desire of all the blessed; and if, moreover, each part could suffer for Thy honour as much as it should desire to suffer, until the last judgment day; yet not even then could I in any wise satisfy Thee, or worthily repay Thee for Thy incomprehensible love, which Thou hast poured upon me through Thine Only One.

O most gracious Father! Thou height of riches, depth of consolations, abyss of mercy, source and river of grace, origin of all good, abyss of holiness, paradise of delights, joy of heaven, full content of the blessed, on Whom I see the angels desire to look, behold! I praise, and laud, and thank and glorify, and extol, and magnify Thee, and all my inward parts confess, honour, and bless Thy holy Name; for Thy goodness, and loving-kindness, and grace and mercy towards me, are exceeding great. And although I am a vessel of uncleanness, stained and spotted with many sins, and unworthy to praise Thee, yet am I bound and ought 257 to praise Thee, by every right. Nay, how can I ever cease from Thy praise, when Thou ceasest not to show kindness unto me? Therefore, vouchsafe in Thy mercy to be praised by me, a vile sinner; since Thou shrinkest not from bestowing daily on me, Thy most neglectful servant, so many gifts and graces, and showing me so great and Fatherly faithfulness and love. Behold! again I offer Thee, most loving Father, this same only and beloved Son of Thine; in union with that love; whereby Thou gavest Him then for me, when Thou didst desire Him to take my nature, and afterwards to undergo the gibbet of the Cross. Nor in all my understanding can I think of aught more noble, or more worthy, or more acceptable to Thy Majesty. Moreover, I offer Thee also this sweet Son of Thine, in union with that love, whereby He offered himself as the highest sacrifice of praise, when on the altar of the Cross; with a loud cry and burning tears; He commended His soul into Thy hands, and Himself, the great High Priest, entered the Holy of Holies, and uncovered the veil of the old tabernacle, and consecrated new Sacraments, not in the blood of sheep; and when anointed, not by the Jewish high-priest, with natural oil, but by thee, His God and Father, with the oil of gladness, 258 He washed away all the sins and trespasses of Thy people in His own Blood. In addition to this I offer Thee His guiltless death, with all the merits of His bitter Passion, and of the blessed and spotless Virgin Mary, and of all the blessed, to Thy eternal glory, for all my sins, iniquities, and negligences; also, for all the living and the dead, for whom Thou wishest me

to pray, O my God, and for whom I am bound to pray, that Thy holy Name may be blessed, and praised, and honoured by them for ever and ever. Amen.

THE THIRTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

Jesus is given vinegar to drink.

In this way, then, as was said a little above, the cruel Jews led Christ to Calvary, a place of condemnation, accursed and shameful, full of the fetid odour of dead mens' bodies and bones. And here it is lawful for us to gather that Christ's death was by far the most shameful of all deaths; and this for four reasons. First, indeed, because in that age crucifixion was the basest and most ignominious kind of death that could be inflicted on the very worst criminals. 259
Secondly, because our Lord was crucified between two thieves, as the chief thief, as if He had been condemned for their crimes as well, and that, being subjected to the same punishment, might be supposed to be equal with them in guilt. Thirdly, because He was put to death, all naked, on the foul site of Calvary, a punishment which was wont to be inflicted only on notorious criminals. Fourthly, because He was put to death during the Paschal solemnity, as if His life had been so wicked and abominable, that it became a necessity to send Him out of the world as quickly as possible, being such an universal object of hatred, as well as a burden to all.

Now when they had come to this mount of Calvary, our gentle Lord became exceeding worn and weak from excessive weariness and the heavy burden of the Cross, and they gave Him to drink, as was the custom to give to the condemned; not indeed sweet, but corrupt and acid wine, mixed with myrrh and gall, whereby those spiteful and wicked men clearly betrayed the bitter poison of their hearts against Christ, since they left not even one of His members unpunished. But Christ also wished to suffer in all His members, in order perfectly to heal us, who had been wounded in all our members. And because Adam had sinned through lust of the forbidden fruit, our Lord Jesus wished to atone for his sill by the torment 260
of this bitter draught. Alas! how many are to be found at the present day, who think nothing at all of offending God by the sin of gluttony, and of despising His law, whereby He has commanded us not to indulge our concupiscence, but rather to bridle our sensual appetites, and subject them to the spirit, that the flesh may not at any time rebel against the spirit, but be humbly subject to it, and obey it. Oh! how great at the present day is the number of those who stuff their rotten bodies, not by the eating of a single apple, but with many and divers kinds of food, all of them exceeding delicate, and thus offend God. These are they whose God is their belly, and who make of the temple of the Holy Ghost a pot-house of devils; because, forgetting the form of their noble being, they have changed the image of the likeness of God into the likeness of senseless cattle. These are they, in a word, who fear not to destroy soul and body, in order to satisfy their sensual appetites and lusts. Now these, it is clear, do not once only give a bitter draught to Christ Jesus, but daily offer Him the bitterest of all gall to drink. Of a truth, these men have forgotten that soberness is a kind of preparation for all virtues, that it is the throne of chastity and purity, the purge of the soul, the mother 261

of health, the way of heaven, the shield against the temptations of fleshly desires, and the discipline of the Christian life. For as the old serpent laid low our first parents through gluttony, so his weapons are easily turned aside through soberness. Nature, indeed, is itself greatly inclined towards evil and sensual delights, and seeketh her own pleasure in many ways; hence it is necessary that a spiritual man should act prudently and reasonably on this point, so as to say with holy Job: “Before I take my meat, I sigh.” And, of a truth, as Augustine saith: “We ought to take food in the same way as medicine, with such moderation and discretion, that it may help us to serve God; and with such gratitude, that at each single morsel praise may redound to our most kind Creator. Amen.

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THE THIRTY-THIRD CHAPTER.

Jesus is again stripped of His garments.

After this they again cruelly tore off the garments of our Lord and Saviour, and left Him as shamefully naked as when He came forth from His Mother's womb. For as Adam had broken the law, so Christ wished to cancel our debts and sins. Adam was overcome by seeking for garments, Christ conquered by being stripped of His garments. Therefore, although our Lord Jesus, both at His birth and His whole life long, was poor indeed, yet on the Cross He desired to offer to us a perfect example and form of true poverty, by thus suffering Himself to be stripped naked, so as not even to have a thread left Him, by which He might cover His pure and modest members, or anything on which to lean His sacred Head. But as naked He had come into the world, signifying by this that He had no commerce with the world, so naked He went out of the world. For thus He spake: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me;" that is, nothing of his own. Of a truth, He so lived in this wicked world, that not even the slightest dust of the desire of possession clung to Him. Lastly, for His greater shame and dishonour, He was hung up thus naked in the sight of His bitterest enemies and mockers. 263 For it was not the custom to crucify naked those who were guilty of death, unless they were notorious malefactors, who, as an example for others, were obliged to suffer a horrible death. Adam also, when he had lost his innocence, hastened to clothe himself with garments: but Christ was stripped naked that He might preserve the purity of innocence whole and unhurt; nor had He need of any covering.

Look, now, O my soul! with inward compassion and sorrow of heart, upon thy sweet Redeemer and Lover. See, how the King of glory, Who clotheth and covereth all things, the heaven with clouds, the trees with leaves, the earth with grass and flowers, is Himself stripped of all clothing even to the skin. See, how the Lord of lords is made a pattern of true poverty, and be ashamed after this to murmur, and complain, and to be cast down in mind when anything is taken from thee, or thou art left in inward or outward poverty. Learn from this to follow Jesus, poor, and naked, and forsaken; despise whatever the world hath, in order that thou mayest merit to embrace thy naked Saviour with thine own naked arms, and in turn to be clasped in His embrace, and united to Him in naked love. Observe, I pray thee, how He, Who is the beauty of heaven, is here disfigured, how the height of heaven is brought low, how the clear mirror of purity is uncovered, because unworthy of any covering, since 264 there was no stain in Him that it was necessary to hide. For thus our Lord Himself said of Himself: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Nevertheless, there is no one who can ever understand the grievous pain which eat into His most pure Heart, when He was forced to bear that great confusion and shame; above all, when He had to hang upon the Cross so shamefully in the sight of His purest Mother. Let us see, I pray thee, with great compassion, with what pitiless rage those cruel dogs tore off our Lord's garments, the very hem of which

had healed the woman who laboured with a bloody flux. Who doth not see how cruel must have been that sorrow and torment, when they tore off with such fury and cruelty the garment which had clung to His wounds, and become fastened to them with His Blood, thus, doubtless, causing all His wounds to bleed afresh? Let every man weigh the greatness of this pain in his own heart. And, as is the opinion of some, they again pressed down on His Sacred Head, with incredible torment, the crown of thorns, which they had torn from it, so that there is no pain which can be compared with this.

Come now, O my soul, and meditate upon the agony of Him Who is the joy of heaven. See how His whole Body was again wounded, all His sacred wounds opened afresh, while 265 they streamed with His purest Blood. Behold how His blessed Head, which even the angelic powers gaze at and tremble, and which the Venerable Baptist, S. John, shrunk from touching, was afflicted and tortured by those savage dogs; while the thorns, which again had been placed upon it, inflicted new wounds, so that wound was added to wound. Observe, I beg of thee, how that Royal Blood of His, mingled with brain, flowed down in streams from all His wounds over His face and neck, even to the ground; and how that disfigured Body, so pitiably cut and torn, and which was but one large gaping wound, was now exposed to the wind and cold, and was stiffened thereby. Yet that most meek Lamb bore all this cruel and horrible agony, not only with patience, hut with great desire. Oh! how He stood there trembling with cold, and streaming with blood! Oh! how were all His wounds made larger and deeper, when they madly tore away His garments, and forced one wound to flow into the other, so that our tender Lord Jesus Christ, ever to be embraced with all love, became but one bleeding wound. Here, indeed, was that living well of measureless loving-kindness, from which floweth to us in all abundance whatever we may desire. Of a truth, out of His Sacred Body there flowed forth rivers of His precious Blood, which is the price of our salva- 266 tion and redemption; out of His mouth there came forth sacred words to be the food of our minds; out of His eyes there flowed forth tears of love in torrents, as a proof of His loving-kindness; out of His Heart there sprang that burning love, which forced Him to undergo all that cruel pain; in a word, out of all His actions there flowed forth, in rich abundance, instruction, discipline, and moral teaching for ourselves, whereby we may draw from His Passion not only the payment of our debts, but also a perfect and absolute rule for our life. Who hath such a heart of stone, as not to be moved by these immense benefits, nay, drawn to love?

Lastly, our Lord Jesus was not only stripped naked, but so utterly stripped of all things, as never again to be clothed any more, but to die in that poor nakedness, and naked poverty. Come now, all ye faithful, and let us mourn in every limb of our body, since our Lord standeth here before us, streaming with blood from all His members. Of a truth, that innocent

Lamb desired to be stripped so shamefully naked, in order to clothe our deformity, and to give us back again the robe of innocence, which of old we had lost through the treachery of a certain wicked servant. Oh! what crosses our sweet Jesus underwent in His Heart, when 267
He saw the hatred, and rage, and deceit, and bloodthirstiness of the Jews, how they made exceeding haste to adjust the Cross, and to urge on the executioners, so as to hurry on Christ's death; for to them it was a great inward cross to be forced to see our Lord and Saviour for so long a time moving before them.

Come then, O my soul, and set thy Lord and Saviour before the eyes of thy heart, and imagine that thou seest Jesus, the Bridegroom and delight of thy soul, standing before thee so pitiably crimsoned with blood, and mangled with wounds, and disfigured, and heart-broken, in order to espouse thee in thy foulness as His bride, and to cleanse, heal, and adorn thee, and to free thee from all thy debt. How canst thou suffer to see the Beloved of thy heart so miserably treated? Wilt thou not desire with thy whole heart to be utterly dissolved in tears, in order to wash the all-wounded Body of thy Beloved, and to cleanse it from all its disfigurement? O happy thou, if all the marrow of thy bones, and thy very heart's blood, could be distilled in ointment so as to anoint all thy Bridegroom's wounds! Oh! that thy heart itself might be melted in the fire of love, and be changed into grateful food for the sweetening of the mouth of thy Beloved, which hath been made so bitter by the vinegar and 268
gall. And although thou canst do none of these things in reality, yet in desire thou wilt do them, and that is enough for thy Beloved, Who weigheth thy heart rather than thy deeds. Wherefore, when thou hast thus washed and anointed thy Bridegroom, lay Him to rest with great devotion and reverence on the sweet bosom of God His Father, as on the most pleasant bed that thou canst think of; place His worshipful Head, which has been so cruelly punctured by sharp thorns, and which hung so long upon the Cross without anything to rest upon, on the tender breast of God, as on the softest pillow that thou canst find, that He may take His rest.

But let us go back to our sweet Lord, Whom we left standing in such wretched plight, and worn away by such cruel pains. Let us, I pray, impress so deeply upon our hearts this His pitiable image, that never more it may be blotted out of our remembrance. There, too, we may imagine, as some affirm, how Christ Jesus—Who never allowed His spirit to rest from prayer and desire of work—when the executioners were busied in preparing for His death, knelt down with His bare and bleeding knees upon the ground, and lifting up His Heart, and eyes, and hands towards heaven, to God His Father, offered Him the noble sac- 269
rifice of His Passion, for the reconciliation of the human race, in these or like words:

"O Father of heaven, Eternal God, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all creatures, I pray Thee, I beseech Thee, Thou Who always hearest Me, accept now the sacrifice and oblation of Thine only Son; accept My most bitter Passion and My guiltless death, which now out of love I desire to suffer for all the sins and trespasses of the world. I come not into Thy

presence with another's blood, or with the blood of sheep, but Mine own Blood do I shed as full payment for the debts of fallen man. Look down, I beseech Thee, Holy Father, on My humble prayers, on My labour and My sorrow, and on this cruel Passion of Mine, and graciously accept My death, which I have never deserved, but which in My great love I desire to undergo for the sins of all men, so as to destroy death, which Adam brought into the world by his prevarication. Let Thine anger, I beseech Thee; be turned into mercy, and open to lost man the gate of heaven, which for his sin Thou hast utterly closed for so many thousand years, and give him in Thy fatherly mercy a place in Thy everlasting kingdom, that by him the ruins of the wicked angels may be built again, and Thy house filled, and Thy Holy Name praised and blessed for ever and for ever! Amen. 270

THE THIRTY-FOURTH CHAPTER.

Jesus is fastened on the Cross.

After this those inhuman butchers cruelly dragged Jesus towards the Cross, and when He beheld it, the Innocent Lamb saluted it with longing desire, saying in His Heart: “O Blessed Cross! how long have I desired to embrace thee; for three-and-thirty years have I been held fast by the love of thee, that on thee I might work the salvation of men. O precious Wood! by which justice shall be done, and the debt of the prevaricator paid. O most fruitful Wood! blessed among all trees of the earth, thou alone hast been found worthy to bear the fruit of life. O chosen Tree, chosen above all trees to bear the world’s ransom, become now the servant of thy Creator, Who made thee out of nothing.” ‘Then they laid the wounded Body of that innocent Lamb flat upon the rough Cross, and one hand they fastened thereto by a thick nail, with repeated blows, so as to cause Him exceeding cruel agony. Oh! how beyond all power of suffering was this pain to our gentle Redeemer, Whose complexion was 271
so tender and delicate, and Who was so utterly weak and exhausted by all the pains which He had already undergone. Oh! how those blows of the hammer, and the cruel nailing, pierced into the very inmost marrow of His Heart! What must have been His Heart’s pain, how measureless must have been His agony, when that great and blunt nail was hammered down with unutterable torment, through the veins, and nerves, and little bones which meet in the hand! Let every man weigh with himself, what must have been His agony! And because the nail was very blunt and heavy, it drew in the skin with it into the wound, which became so filled and stopped up, that the blood could not flow therefrom. And straightway they stretched the other hand towards the hole made in the other arm of the cross, in order to nail it in like manner. But because the hole was far off, and Christ’s Body was not a little contracted from cold, and blood-shedding, and all the pains He had already suffered, they stretched that hand with a rough rope, holding down, meanwhile, His other hand with extreme force. Thus did they stretch Christ’s sacred arms with horrible pain, until they brought the hand to the place they desired, and there, in like manner, they pierced it with a great nail. After this, they first most cruelly stretched His sacred feet, and then fastened them with a horrible nail. 272

Look then, O my soul, on thy Bridegroom, Who is both thy God and thy Maker, and see how He hath gone up to the bed of His love; low wide He hath stretched out His arms to embrace thee; and how lovingly He hath invited thee to Himself, making use, as it were, of the words of the Song of Songs: “Come to Me, My sister, My bride, My dove; come, I say, into the holes of the rock, into My own sweet wounds. Come, for behold! I am ready, and our bed is covered with flowers, adorned with the roses of My wounds, and of My own precious blood. Come then, O my soul, with thy whole self, and see all that thy God hath suffered for thee. Behold, but with great compassion, how His sacred limbs have been

stretched, and disjointed, and torn, and pulled, and disturbed far and wide out of their joints, so that not one cleaveth to its own place, and they can all easily be numbered. Can there be any one who is not moved to compassion by such unutterable pain? Oh! how all His sacred limbs and nerves were stretched and bent like bows, as they were drawn one towards the other. Oh! how entirely He offered Himself for us, when He had not even one limb which was not tortured in horrible agony and labour, and wholly busied in the work of our salvation. For so inhumanly was He stretched, that one limb could bring no help to another, because 273 all alike were tortured with suffering and pain beyond all comprehension. We, indeed, if we are visited with some slight wound, can hardly suffer any one even gently to touch it; yet the whole weight of Christ's sacred Body pressed upon the wounds of His hands and feet. Oh! how pitiably were all His limbs and nerves contracted! how were all His inward parts troubled, and hurt, and worn away? This pain surpassed all grasp of human understanding; it was simply intolerable, yet it lasted for so long a time. Hence Venerable Bede saith: "Christ hanging upon the Cross, His hands and feet fastened by nails, was consumed and worn away by a slow death, and He continued in pain, not because it was a pleasure for Him still to live, but lest His Passion might too soon be over."

Let us, for a little while, be made partakers of this bitter Passion, for it was our sins which inflicted it upon the Son of God. Let us repay, in some poor way at least, our tender Lord for His Passion, so far as we are able. This surely will we do, if we wish to be conformed to His Crucifixion, and as S. Paul saith, we will crucify the flesh with its damnable vices and concupiscences, by resisting them even to blood, and so wear it away by the afflictions of the Cross, that sin may no more reign in our mortal body, and the power of concupiscence 274 may be held ever strongly bound by the fear of God. We will so conform ourselves to Christ's Crucifixion, as if we too lay stretched upon the Cross, by taking and drawing it into our hearts with all love, so that we may say with Andrew the Apostle: 'O good Cross, so long desired, and now, at last, prepared for a soul that loveth thee; behold, safely and gladly I come to thee, so that thou, too, mayest receive me with rejoicing, as a disciple of Him Who hung upon thee; for ever have I been thy lover, and ever have I desired to embrace thee."

Now this is to be understood not only of the cross of outward affliction, but of all distress and affliction, whether outward or inward, which shall happen unto us by God's permission; whether it be persecution, or annoyance, or contempt on the part of men, or the loss either of those who are dear to us, or of temporal things, or the temptation of the enemy, or inward anguish of mind on account of our want of progress; and all these crosses we will gladly take from God's hands, and stretch ourselves upon them, saying with holy David: "My heart hath waited for reproach and misery." And not only these crosses will we suffer to be laid upon us, but we will, of our own accord, go further still, by crucifying ourselves, and holding 275 ourselves up to contempt and mockery, and making ourselves out of no account; in a word, by stripping and scourging ourselves. Now this means that, when we are despised by others,

we will slight our own selves, as of no account, and heartily confess that we are a hundredfold more vile, and more worthy of contempt and scorn, than all men can bring upon, us; nay, that we are unworthy even to be despised by such noble creatures. Moreover, we will scourge, and afflict, and crucify ourselves; that is, we will make our cross heavier, and we will plant it deeper within us, by exercising ourselves therein, as holy Job saith: “I will speak in the trouble of my spirit, and I will hold converse with the bitterness of my soul.” For example: when we are utterly desolate and troubled in heart because of the sins of our past life, and our exceeding great negligences and manifold vices, and because our progress in virtue is simply nothing at all; then we will not straightway hurry to confession, in order to be relieved of all this trouble—for this would be to throw away the cross, and it is ever the devil’s counsel to us to say: “Come down from the cross, and save thyself,”—but bravely will we cling to the cross, to which we have been fastened with Christ, by even increasing our own cross, so as to consider within ourselves how little is this distress of ours, when compared 276
with all the wrongs and contempt which we have inflicted on the Lord of majesty, by our exceeding great iniquities, and by very often having dared, vile worms though we are, to resist so great a Lord, and transgress His will, and by not having feared to offend so loving and faithful a Father, Who is ever embracing us with such Fatherly love, and heaping upon us so many benefits.

Moreover, we will think of God’s immense goodness, in that so mighty a Lord, Who might at once have avenged the wrong done to Him, hath borne all this our contempt and shameless wickedness, with so much gentleness and long-suffering. The very elements cannot bear to see their Maker wronged, but, like David’s servants, when he was cursed and reviled by Semei, lift themselves up and cry for vengeance on the wrongs done their King. But our tender Lord commandeth them to cease, saying: “Suffer them to heap all this contempt upon Me; gladly will I bear it, that peradventure they may be converted and repent. For I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that they should turn from their wickedness, and live.”

Thus, then, our Lord Jesus Christ hung upon the Cross in all His immense pain, and 277
with constancy endured His affliction; nor would He come down from the Cross either because of the curses and blasphemies of the Jews, or the immensity of His pain. But He made His torment still more grievous, by recalling to mind all the ingratitude of men, and all the wrong and contempt done and shown to His Father, and all the vengeance that would be visited upon them, and that in many His Passion would have no effect at all. Further, we will conform ourselves, to our Beloved on His Cross, that as He was lifted up thereon from the earth, so we, too, may say with holy Job: “My soul hath chosen to be hanged up, and my bones death;” and all our members; our hands, and feet, and hearts, and all the powers of our soul will we lift up, and stretch forth to God, as if to show Him praise, and love, and

thanksgiving, and honour, and reverence, whereby all our inward parts may bless God, and all our bones cry out: “Lord, who is like unto Thee?”

Moreover, when we have thus, with our whole strength and our whole power, been lifted from earth towards heaven, and when we shall wait with a loving thirst for the heavenly dew and sweet influence of the Holy Ghost, saying with David: “Let my soul be filled with fat and good things, and my mouth shall utter praise with lips of rejoicing;” then, indeed, will our Lord teach us to sing a far different song from that which of old He taught the 278
children of Israel in Babylon. For our jubilee will be turned into mourning, and our joy into grief, and instead of the songs of Sion, we shall sing with sorrowful voice: “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me; I will call upon Thee in the day-time, and Thou shalt not hear.” And this is that blessed hanging up which Job chose, and this the death which he desired, so as to be able to reach neither heaven nor earth, but to hang suspended between both. For to such a man earth is a cross, and he loathes it; and heaven is closed, and the clouds are forbidden to give their rain. So also did the same Job hang in his wretchedness and desolation, when he said: “If I go to the east, He appeareth not; if to the west, I shall not understand Him. If I go to the left, what shall I do? I cannot reach Him. If I turn me to the right, I shall not see Him. But He knoweth my way, and He shall prove me like gold which passeth through the fire. O truly blessed cross and holy hanging!” And while we persevere in this pitiable thirst, and in crying and groaning towards heaven, our thirst will be quenched with vinegar and gall; that is, instead of the sweetness of devotion, we shall suffer bitter and unclean thoughts, and then again we shall say with Job: “The things which formerly my soul refused to touch, have now, in my distress, become my meat.” And again: “If I shall say, my 279
bed shall comfort me, and I shall be refreshed, speaking with myself on my couch, Thou shalt frighten me with dreams, and shake me with horror by visions;” that is, if we wish to return to our exercises on the bed of our retired and tranquil heart, where, with a loving soul, we were wont by night to seek our God, and to receive many secret kisses, here Thou wilt terrify us with horrible forms and images, and phantoms of hell and darkness. Being, then, so utterly desolate, and not having anywhere, even for a moment, whereon to lay our head, how shall we contain ourselves? Where shall we receive consolation, except on our cross, saying with holy Job: “This is my consolation, that when He afflicteth me with sorrow, He should not spare; and that He Who began, Himself should crush me.”

This danger, then, will we clearly incur, and expose our lives for His love, Who laid down His life for us, and in this desolation we will resign ourselves wholly to God, saying: “Lord, into Thy hands and Thy will I commend my soul, now and for ever.”

But now let us go back to our Beloved’s bed, that is, the Holy Cross, whereon our Love was pitiably stretched and lifted up. Oh! in what anguish was God’s sweet Virgin-Mother 280
Mary! How each blow of the hammers, as she heard it during her Son’s crucifixion, beat down her tender heart! How perfectly did she bear in herself the image of the Cross, being

herself impressed with its form, and, as it were, transformed into it. Nor can we doubt that through her great compassion she was fastened with her Son to the Cross, and that she suffered inwardly, what Christ suffered outwardly. Let us, too, stand for a little while with our most loving Mother by the Cross. It is good for us to stand here for a little while, for therefrom flow rivers of graces and gifts. And let us also, together with our afflicted Mother Mary,—if we be the children of grace—be wounded by sorrow and compassion in our inmost souls, towards Christ's cruel Passion; for He is our brother, our own flesh and blood, and all that is ours is the sins for which He is thus afflicted. Let us mount up with burning love and devotion upon our Beloved's bed, for He is waiting for us with exceeding great desire, and His arms are wide open to receive us. In order to kiss us, He hath bowed down His Head; let us, then, lift up all the powers of our soul, and all our members towards Him, that we may clasp Him in a loving embrace, and with devout reverence let us press Him to our 281
hearts, saying with the spouse in the Canticle of Canticles: "A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me. He shall dwell between my breasts." Our heart, let it be His pleasant pillow, whereon He may rest His Sacred Head, which hath hung so long in such grievous pain, without anything to bear upon. Oh! I pray of you, let us not pass by this blessed bed of the Holy Cross, for it is our bed; but with the spouse of the Canticle, let us seek, by the light of the torches of love, on our own bed for Him Whom our soul loveth. For whatever we see weak in Him, He hath taken on Him for the love of us, and from us, and His infirmity is our health and medicine.

Now, with our whole understanding, let us search out the high mystery of this venerable bed of the Cross.

So great and so measureless is the glory of the Cross, that there is nothing in it without mystery. First of all, it was made of two pieces of wood, which signify the two Testaments. For whatever the Old Testament foretold by writing and in figure, all that the New Testament announceth as truly fulfilled. Moreover, these two pieces of wood are joined together by Christ's firm faithfulness as by a strong nail, and are sealed with Christ's seal. And the Holy Cross itself, like a true bed, hath four corners, towards which the sacred members of the 282
Son of God were stretched, that thereby it might be given us clearly to understand, that He embraceth the whole race of man; that is, all men, in one common love, and that He, as a true lover, desireth to draw them all to Himself upon His bed, from the four corners of the world. For He died for all, and desireth all men, without distinction, to be saved. And this, too, is set forth and hinted by the very form of the Cross. For its upper part signifieth that He wished to restore the ruins of the angels; the lower part, that He redeemeth the Fathers from *Limbus*. The right-hand side, that He protecteth His own friends, and blesseth them. The left-hand side, that He wisheth to draw to Himself, and convert His enemies, and all sinners. By the upper end is signified the opening of heaven; by the lower, the overthrow of hell; by the right arm, the diffusion of grace; by the left, the forgiveness of sins. Let us, then,

according to the Apostle's instruction, be of like mind with Christ Jesus; that is, let us conform ourselves spiritually to the aforesaid Cross, so as to prepare a pleasant bed for Christ in our souls, a bed constructed with four corners, of which one shall look upwards, and another downwards, and the third within, and the fourth without. These are the four paths of life, which not only lead us to paradise, but adorn us with such pleasant beauty, that we are made 283
a paradise of delights to God Himself, and that, as from the earthly paradise, four rivers exceeding pleasant may go forth from us, leaping up into life everlasting.

The highest corner, indeed, of this bed, or the highest extremity, is to open and stretch forth our hearts and all our desires, with our whole strength, towards God in love, gratitude, praise, reverence, lowly resignation, obedience, and subjection, so that at all moments we desire to pay to God as great a tribute of praise and honour as all creatures could wish to offer throughout endless ages. Yet not even with this ought our burning thirst to be satisfied, but we ought also humbly to pray to God, that He would Himself perfect His own praise, which no creature can perfect or even understand. The lowest extremity is to cast ourselves down so deeply in great humility, and to humble and drown ourselves therein, and to hold ourselves of such little moment, as not only to deem ourselves the vilest and most worthless of sinners in the whole world, but to desire to be esteemed such by all men, and that such may be the opinion of all men with regard to us. For of a truth, every man ought so to cast himself down into the lowest depths, as not even to be able, by all the gifts and graces of God, to be lifted up, but the more bountiful and abundant the gifts and graces which God 284
poureth out upon him, so much the more ought he to humble himself, and to esteem himself of no moment, and to tell of and praise God's goodness, making it his whole care to wonder how God, who is so high and glorious, should have remembered even for one moment so useless, worthless, poor, and utter a worm, and that He should vouchsafe to work through him even anything at all. And the outward extremity is to be widely stretched out towards all creatures, so as to embrace all things, and all beings in heaven and on earth, and in purgatory.

And first, indeed, let us embrace the blessed spirits of heaven with loving fervour, by congratulating them on their glory, and by giving God thanks for the same, as if we ourselves enjoyed it. Then, too, let us embrace the souls imprisoned in purgatory, by suffering with them as greatly in their pains and torments, as if we ourselves bore their pains, and let us help them to the utmost of our power. Thirdly, let us be stretched out towards the rest of men, by embracing them all with love, and excluding no one, and by helping every one, and lightening every one's burden so far as we are able; and this with such love of our hearts, as to grieve that there should be even one who is beyond our help; and by performing all our 285
works with such great love, as to wish to be of as much service to all men as to ourselves. Thus, then, let us so turn ourselves to what is outward, as ever to abide within, or at least to be able without hindrance to return within, and that thus our going out may be in reality

our coming in. For, fourthly,—and this is that extremity which looketh within,—we ought, with Moses, deeply to press down all our faculties into the inward recesses, in the secret and only solitude or desert of our quiet heart, until we have passed beyond, and lost all multiplicity and unrest, and may reach, together with the same Moses, unto the adoring gaze of God's face, where in silence we will do homage to our Lord. There we shall hear God's inward voice crying in the wilderness: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths." Of this wilderness our Lord speaketh in Osee: "I will lead her," He saith, that is, the loving soul, "into solitude, and there I will speak to her heart." These are the four corners or four horns of the Holy Cross and Bed of Love. And of a truth, whosoever hath constructed and made ready his bed, may with confidence invite his Lover, Christ, in the words of the loving soul, and say: "Come, my Beloved, for our bed is green with flowers." 286

THE THIRTY-FIFTH CHAPTER.

A prayer to Jesus Crucified.

Jesus, Paradise of delights, Key of David, that shuttest and no man openeth, and openest and no man shutteth, stretch forth the arms of Thy divine mercy and grace, and take me, Thy wretched creature, that flieth to Thee in his trouble. Moaning and trembling like some poor sheep, when surrounded on all sides by many and savage wolves, I come to Thee, the Good Shepherd, who hast laid down Thy life for Thy sheep. Open to me Thy sacred Wounds, that I may lie hidden therein, and be concealed from the fiery darts of the enemy. Embrace me, even as a poor mother is wont to embrace her sick child, in the bowels and arms of Thy mercy, since Thou hast willed, out of pure love for me, to be so fearfully stretched upon the Cross, and so fastened thereto with nails, that all Thy bones were torn out of their joints, and so disturbed out of their proper seat and place, that they might all easily be numbered; 287
and thus wert Thou fastened hand and foot to the Tree of Life with horrible pain, that Thou mightest blot out, by Thine own innocent Blood, the handwriting of the old debt, which our first parents had contracted by stretching forth their hands towards the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; and that Thou mightest fasten sin to the Cross and utterly destroy it. Kill, also, within me, all the desires of the flesh, and whatever I have of self-will, or of pride, or of vicious leaning. Extinguish in me all vice, and whatever is displeasing to the eyes of Thy holiness, and stir up anew within me a good and firm spirit, and a desire of practising all virtues. Raise up all the powers of my soul by love, that I may love, praise, thank, and honour Thee, O God, my Maker and my Saviour, and that not even one of my members may cease to bless and magnify Thy holy Name. Re-make and repair me as Thy own instrument, which I myself have destroyed, and make me so subject to Thee, and obedient and pliant, that Thou mayest be able to work in me as freely and pleasantly as Thou hast ever worked in any creature. For since we have drawn into ourselves the vein of corruption from the root of the sin of our first parents, we have become prone to all wickedness. Nor can this poison of the old serpent and vicious propensity be cured, except by the divine
mystery of the Holy Cross. But if, O Eternal Wisdom, human nature, when it was still in its 288
first dignity, and abiding in itself, could not remain stable, but fell; how much less shall I, who am already corrupt and vicious, be able, by my own power, to lift myself above myself? I cannot, indeed, without Thy great mercy, be restored to my first innocence, but I shall be as one born out of due time, brought forth by his mother with continual pain, and all the labour and pain of the birth will be borne in vain.

O tender Jesus, if Thou hast so loved me when I was lost, as to redeem me by Thy Precious Blood, and to undergo for my sake a most shameful death; how much more now wilt Thou in nowise suffer me to perish, or all Thy labour and pain to be of no effect in me. O merciful God! behold, I desire to serve and obey Thee with my whole strength. But Thou,

Who hast given me this good will and desire, must also grant me the effect of good works.
For from Thee is all our good, and not only Thou givest to will and to work, but also Thou
preparest the heart to desire to have this good will. For what have I of myself? What have I
been able to draw from the inheritance of original sin, save all corruption and proneness to 289
every evil? Wherefore, if there be ought else in me, this is Thy work, O Lord! and it cometh
from Thee, the source of all good, Who art just and holy in all Thy works.

THE THIRTY-SIXTH CHAPTER.

Jesus with the Cross is lifted up on high.

When, then, they had fastened Jesus to the Cross, straightway His cruel executioners raised Him, together with the Cross, with great rage, and they savagely placed the Holy Cross in the hole of the rock, and they let it fall down therein, so that by this fall all Christ's members and inward parts were shaken with cruel pain, and all the more cruel for having before been so tightly stretched. And again the Sacred Wounds of His hands and feet broke forth like fountains, and began to flow in streams. Of a truth, these are the four rivers of paradise, that go forth from the garden of pleasure, and water the whole earth.

O all ye that thirst! come to the waters, and draw with joy from the Saviour's fountains. Suck honey from the rock, and oil and wine from the hard rock. Buy without silver, and without any price, wine and milk. 290 For truly this is that cornerstone, firm, and which cannot be shaken, rejected indeed by the Jews, but chosen by the Gentiles, which Jacob, that is to say, the Father of Heaven, raised as a sign of grace and mercy and peace, and anointed with the oil of mercy. Come all ye, as many as love God, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, for it is exceeding fertile, and rich, and aboundeth with all delights. The river of pleasure, which goeth out from the midst of paradise, that is, from Christ's wounded side, floweth through the whole of it. This is truly the land of promise, flowing with milk and honey. Here is seen the cluster hanging on the staff. Here is the rock twice struck with the rod, which poureth forth not only living waters, but rivers of oil; so that as many as go up this mountain may be sanctified, and may say with the loving soul in the Canticle of Canticles: "Thy name is as oil poured out." Here, also, is the vessel full of the oil of grace, which was sent by the Father upon earth, that the sick man might be healed thereby, who, going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among thieves, and was left half dead from his wounds; in which also is contained the price of our salvation. And this vessel was not only pierced in many places, but its end was also knocked out, so that every man may draw therefrom as it 291 pleaseth him. And this Christ testifieth concerning Himself, when He saith, "I was poured out like water." Moreover, although the vessel is small, yet it is ever full, having been blessed by God, so that never will the oil fail, as long as there are empty vessels to receive it.

Now for this reason was Christ lifted up, that the enemy, with his whole strength, might be thrown down. He was taken and lifted up from the earth, that He might draw us after Him, far away from every earthly lust. He was lifted up on high, that, looking upon us, His sheep, wandering afar off, He might bring us back to Him by a look of grace and mercy. Moreover, He was lifted up into the air, that He might purify it from demons, as He had purified the earth by His precious Blood-shedding, and at the same time might open to us a safe road to heaven. He was lifted up, one part of His Cross being raised on high, the other resting on the earth; and thus He hung between the two, that He might unite earth with

heaven; that is, men with angels, peace between them not as yet having been established, and might show to us that He will be the Eternal Mediator and Peace-Maker between His Father and man. Hence, as a solid wall for the house of Israel, He set Himself against God's anger, and took upon Himself all the weapons of divine wrath and vengeance, so that He 292
was covered with deadly wounds.

Come, then, all ye faithful, and behold how your Saviour, Leader, and King fighteth for you, and delivereth you from your enemies, and restoreth you to your first freedom. Now is the standard of victory, the trophy of the Cross, lifted up, under which we must fight, and which we must guard from all who may oppose it or come in its way. Let us be glad, then, let us rejoice, let us glory in the Holy Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, despising every kind of arms, by this Cross alone hath He willed to cast down His enemy. And He so loved it, that He came down to earth to seek it, for heaven beareth not this kind of tree; and He feared not to become a stranger to His glory and His joy, and an exile from His own kingdom, and to undergo all ignominy, and pain, and trouble, that He might embrace this Cross. Thus S. Paul saith: "Let us look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, Who, when joy was proposed to Him, bore the Cross, and despised the shame, nay, and all affliction that could happen to Him.

Moreover, by the fact that our Lord was crucified, not within the city, or inside a house, 293
but outside in an open plate, is signified to us that He came to redeem, not merely the house of Israel, and that He died not only for the Jewish people, but the whole world. Thus, in the Canticle of Canticles, when He saith: "I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valley," He doth not call Himself the lily of the garden, planted and brought up by the care of men, for He sprang from untilled earth, that is, from the untouched womb of His Virgin-Mother. He is also the Lamb without spot, and the white lily, the offspring of the valley of tears, which, being aforetime accursed, brought forth only thorns and briars, but which now offereth its first-fruits to God, with a new benediction. Now, we may here observe, that our Lord hath given us His own loving-kindness, for our earth hath brought forth its fruit, and truth hath arisen out of this same earth of ours. Of a surety, He is that fair lily of our valley, of sparkling whiteness, that lighteth up the whole world with its splendour, and filleth it with the sweet odour of its scent, that is, of His virtue; and there go forth from it rays of gold, that is, His Godhead, which lieth hidden under the white leaves of His most pure manhood. Let, then, our earth rejoice at being adorned with so fair a fruit: let our valley cease from mourning; nor let it be called any more the valley that hath been forsaken, and left barren and accursed, but the valley of fruitfulness, and the soil of fatness, and the field 294
of plenty, which the Lord hath blessed. For what of old had become tainted by the taste of the serpent's poison, hath now been purified again by the balm of Christ's Precious Blood, and hath been watered by heavenly dew, through the pouring out of the Holy Ghost, so that it hath brought forth not one only, but numberless lilies, amongst which the loving soul

declareth that her Beloved walketh and feedeth. For as many as there are men on earth of a clean heart, who love God, so many lilies hath our valley brought forth. And among these the Spouse feedeth with delight; here He walketh with exceeding pleasantness; here He dwelleth with great desire; here it is His delight to be; and here, too, is the food on which He most gladly feedeth, namely, that His Father's will may be accomplished. But what are all these other lilies compared with that single Lily, from whose seed all the rest have sprung, and borrowed their beauty, and form, and odour,—by the very odour of which serpents and all corrupt things are driven away?

Hither, then, like the busy bee, let us fly, passing from Wound to Wound, nor let us enjoy any other food, for these flow with honey. 295 And what else are Christ's sacred and honeyed words upon the Cross, but flowers flowing with honey, which springs up from the cup of the lily, that is, the Holy Cross? Now, if we diligently press these, we shall be able to suck honey therefrom.

So also our Lord Jesus is that Divine Light, which the Father of heaven hath sent on earth, and which lay so long hidden under the bushel of Christ's lowly Humanity, but which was now taken up, and set upon the candlestick of the Cross, that as many as are in the house of the Church may be enlightened thereby. The Jews, indeed, broke the bushel in many places, and the Light began to pour itself forth through its chinks, so that a certain dark house which stood very near it was all lit up with its rays, and a voice came forth therefrom, and cried: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest to Thy kingdom." But if the power and efficacy of this light was so great when it shone only through the chinks, what would it have done when the whole bushel had been utterly broken, and it was able to shed forth its splendour without any hindrance? Of a surety, we should have seen not one, but many enlightened, beating their breasts, crying out; mourning, groaning, and saying: "Of a truth, this Man was the Son of God!" For as we read that after the death of Joseph the children of Israel were multiplied, so also, after Christ's death, the number of those who 296 believed was increased.

But let us go back to Christ's wounded Body, and with a certain sensible, affectionate compassion, let us behold the torment whereby He is surrounded; for, indeed, there was not one member which was not torn out of its place with pain unutterable. Oh! how full of pain were those arms of His so fearfully stretched! How did the torments of those wounds pierce His Heart, as they bore up for so long a time the whole weight of His Body! How great was the anguish of His sacred Soul, when, deprived of all comfort and light, it bore all this Cross and pain in its own weight! Truly, the scale was laden as much as it could bear, and the other scale carried the sins of the whole world. Now, if there be in us one little spark of love, if any bowels of compassion are left us, we cannot but compassionate our Maker and our Saviour, when we see Him hanging here so pitiably before our eyes. For who would

not have compassion even on some brute beast, if it was thus treated? And, indeed, our tender Jesus not only hung there in intolerable pain, in order to move us to tears and compunction, but to inflame and provoke us in like manner to love, by every proof and sign of love. He was lifted up on high that He might be seen by all: He stretched out His arms wide 297 that He might embrace us all. He was fastened with hard and rough nails to the Cross, that He might lead us by longsuffering to penance. From His whole Body there flowed forth blood, that in all abundance He might give us to drink of His best medicine, His own precious Blood. Great and deep were His Wounds, that we might have ever open access to Him, and a safe hiding and resting-place from every attack of temptation and affliction. His Side He suffered to be pierced, that we might have an open way into His Heart. With a loud voice He cried out, that He might be heard by all. Bitterly He wept, that He might move us all to compunction, devotion, and compassion. His Head He bowed down, that He might give us the kiss of reconciliation and of love. Who then, after this, can be of so wicked and perverse a heart, so hardened in sin, as not to be moved by all these signs of love, and inflamed to love Him in return as much as he can, and, indeed, with his whole strength, for His love is beyond all understanding?

Who is there who will not wholly turn to Him, Whom he sees thus wholly turned to himself, especially if he observe Who He is Who asketh for this love, and from whom it is 298 asked? Marvellous, indeed, it is, that the heart of a man who weigheth these things as they deserve, should not be turned within itself for exceeding wonder, and wholly melt away with love. Who will despair of forgiveness when he seeth all these proofs and signs of mercy?

As many, therefore, of us, as have been bitten, and wounded, and tainted by the pestilential serpent, let us fly beneath the Cross of our Lord Jesus. Let us look, not on the brazen serpent hanging on a pole, but on Jesus, the true Son of God, hanging on the Cross, Who offereth us the health-giving balm of His precious Blood. Let us say with a mournful voice, like S. Bernard: “Of what art Thou guilty, sweet Boy? What hast Thou done, O loving Youth? What is Thy crime? What the cause of Thy condemnation? Of a truth, I am the cause of Thy pain. That which the wicked servant hath done, his Lord hath undone; the debt which the unjust man hath contracted, the Just One hath paid. O, Son of God! to what depth hath Thy lowliness descended, when for me Thou hast been made obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross? Concupiscence drew me to what is unlawful: holy love hath drawn Thee, for my sake, to the Cross. I took an apple, Thou art torn with nails. I tasted that apple’s sweetness, Thou tastest the bitterness of gall. Eve rejoiceth with me in my wretchedness; Mary, weeping, hath compassion on Thee at the Crucifixion. I lifted up my head proudly 299 towards the forbidden fruit, Thou hast bent Thy Head to the crown of thorns. O Jesus, the Eternal health of all who believe in Thee, the Redeemer of all who hope in Thee, may Thy Cross be for me a sure protection against all my enemies. May Thy wounds be for me a sure refuge in every temptation; hide me therein, until the concupiscence and heat of sin shall

have passed away. May Thy innocent Blood, flowing from Thy sacred hands, wash away the foulness of my sinful acts; and again, I raise up my hands and all my members to Thee in devotion, prayer, love, praise, thanksgiving, and an accomplishment of Thy most gracious will. May the Wounds of Thy feet wipe away the remembrance of the wanderings of my perverse journeys, and henceforward direct my feet into the way of everlasting life, and suffer me not to wander from the paths of Thy commandments. Amen."

300

THE THIRTY-SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Jesus was numbered with thieves.

Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ was numbered with transgressors, and lifted upon the Cross between two thieves, as if He had been the chief thief. This was done by the wickedness of the Jews, that Christ, Who was in Himself most innocent, might share in their guilt, and that all might believe that He was like to them in conduct, since He had been condemned to like punishment; and that thus through the wickedness of others He might become infamous, Who was Himself the Just One. But our humble Jesus refused not to hang between those for whom He desired to die. And, indeed, He was numbered with the transgressors upon earth, that we might be numbered among the choirs of angels in heaven. For a little while His good name was blotted out amongst men, that our names might be written for ever in the Book of Life. He was hung up between two thieves, not as partaker of their wickedness, but that He might make them partakers of His Godhead. He hung, I say, between them, not as their fellow in murder, but as the Medicine of Life. He hung between the transgressors, not as a wicked one, but as the Judge, signifying thereby that all power had been given Him in heaven and on earth, and that He had been appointed to be the Judge of the living and the dead. This was why He ascended the judgment-seat of the 301
Holy Cross between two of the wicked, that He might in His mercy bestow life upon the one, and in His justice pass sentence of death everlasting upon the other, and that He might show in like manner that in His hands was the empire of life and of death. By this He also shadowed forth the form of the judgment to come, when He will place the good on His right hand and the wicked on His left.

THE THIRTY-EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Of the glorious title of Christ's Cross.

Moreover, Pilate, according to the custom of the Romans, wrote the cause of Christ's death upon a tablet, and commanded it to be fastened above the Cross. Written in three languages, were these words: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." And although Pilate was a heathen man, yet he wrote this at the dictation of the Holy Ghost, for the shame indeed and confusion of the Jews, but for the glory and triumph of Christ. Thus, although that wicked nation refused to acknowledge Christ as their King during His life-time, yet at 302
His Passion, by that most true title, they were forced to acknowledge Him even against their will, and to confess the truth before the whole city. By this title the great cruelty of the Jews and Christ's justice are also declared, since in their wickedness they had put their own King to a shameful death, having no other cause against Him, except that He was their King. From this, also, it is clear that Christ's Death was undeserved, since no other cause of death was inscribed on the title, nor could be inscribed. Thus the power of God Almighty worked secretly in the unbeliever's heart, so that he could not write otherwise than as he was inspired by God; nor could he change it, although this was asked of him by the Jews. For the Jews would not hear Pilate, when he said he found no cause in our Lord; wherefore, also, he himself gave not unto them, but said: "What I have written, I have written." Thus he avenged Himself on the Jews, so that all the fault and the evil fell upon them. By this title, too, our Lord was separated from the thieves, so that every one might perceive, that not for any crime of His own, but out of pure love He had laid down His life for His friends.

Now by these four words of the title are declared the hidden mysteries of the Holy Cross. 303
By the first word, "*Jesus*," that is, Saviour, are expressed the cause and virtue of the Cross, for by the Holy Cross we are all saved and healed; and as by the wood of disobedience we were lost, so by the wood of obedience we are saved. And this was why our Lord chose the death of the cross. By the second word, "*of Nazareth*," that is, the "flower" or "green thing," is shown to us that Christ hung not on the Cross, a small, dry, and barren wood, but like the grape upon the vine, or the flower upon the stem, since He is Himself the most noble flower of the rod of Jesse, whereon the Holy Ghost hath rested. Like the grape, too, He is pressed out, that He may minister to us in all abundance the delightful draught of His own precious Blood. By the third word, "*King*;" are signified to us the immense power and empire of Christ, which He won by the victory of the Cross, as S. Paul saith: "Christ was made obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross; wherefore, also, God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." Lastly, by the fourth word, "of the Jews," is declared, not only that He was King of the Jews, but also of all believers; for Juda signifieth "one who confesseth." Hence our Lord saith: "Whosoever shall confess Me
before men, I also will confess him before My Father." And, of a truth, as many as here refuse 304

to confess Him as their King will one day feel Him to be the just Judge, Who shall condemn them, as He Himself saith in the Gospel: "But these Mine enemies, who would not have Me to reign over them, bring them here, and slay them before Me."

Moreover, this title was placed, not on the side of, nor under, but above the Cross. For although the weakness of His human flesh was tortured on the Cross, and was held up to contempt, yet above the Cross was His Royal Majesty, and there shone the glory of His kingdom, which He obtained not in time, nor from man, but which He possessed by His own divine power from everlasting. Again, this title was written, not in the language of one nation only, but in the three chief tongues: Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. The Hebrews, or the Jews, as being instructed in the law of the Lord, were at that time of all men the most religious. The Greeks were held to be the wisest of all. The Latins, or Romans, with whom lay the highest power, and who were lords of the whole world, were judged to be the most mighty of mankind. Now these three languages met together on the title of Christ's Cross, and bore witness that He was the King and Lord of all religion, and wisdom, and power; for the empire
of the whole world, and all wisdom, and all religion and holiness alike bear witness that He 305
was the true King of the Jews, that is, of believers, and that all power, and wisdom, and holiness flow from Him, as from their source.

Moreover, many of the Jews, as the Evangelist saith, read this title. Let us, then, read it as true Jews, that is, true confessors of Christ, and not like the Jews of old, with contempt; but let us read it, and devoutly meditate thereon, by ever impressing it on our hearts, and by wearing it as a shield against all temptations. For this is the title of His triumphant victory, showing how all the might of the enemy hath been broken in pieces by the power of Christ's Cross. Let us confess that *Jesus*, that is, the true Redeemer of the world, is the Lamb without spot, that taketh away the sins of the world; and let us humbly pray Him that He would vouchsafe to heal our souls, and cleanse us from every stain of sin. Let us confess also that He is "of Nazareth;" that is, the "flower of flowers," the flourishing green thing, by praying that He may make us flourish and advance in all virtue. Let us confess, thirdly, that He is the true King of the Jews, that is, of believers, for all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth. For in Him the heavenly spirits rejoice, and with great reverence do they adore
Him, trembling and affrighted before His measureless power, marvelling at His incompre- 306
hensible wisdom, praising His infinite goodness, confessing that He is the Almighty God, before Whom the armies of heaven fall upon their faces, and cast down their crowns, and giving back to Him the glory which they received from Him, by acknowledging that all honour and glory have come forth from Him, and to Him must be given back. If, then, in this way, we read the title of Christ's Cross, we shall be true Jews, true children of Abraham, and Christ will be our King and our Saviour, and He will reign over us, and defend us, and after this He will take us into His own kingdom, and make us joint-heirs with Him in the kingdom of His Father.

THE THIRTY-NINTH CHAPTER. 307

Jesus clotheth those who had crucified Him.

After this, the executioners who had crucified Christ, and they were four, divided His poor garments amongst them, taking each man his part. But for His tunic, which was seamless, they cast lots. In this is seen Christ's immense humility, that He Who was the Lord of glory should be delivered into the hands of wretches so vile and needy, that with care and exactness they divided amongst them such simple garments, and of such little price. O! how hath the loftiness of heaven bowed itself down! O unutterable patience of Christ; Who saw these things done under His eyes, and yet suffered them! Of a truth this is that innocent Lamb, Who, when He was offered for the sins of the world, opened not His Sacred Mouth against them that mocked Him; and speared and struck Him, but meekly covered His murderers with His own garments. Moreover, the division of His garments into four parts may be taken to represent the diffusion of the faith into the four quarters of the world, so that all might be made glad by the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus, and might have a share therein, and that by believing in Christ, might deserve to be clothed with, and to put on, Christ, even as the sun covereth and adorneth the earth, and as wood clotheth itself with
fire. And the seamless tunic, which on this account was not divided, signifieth the indissoluble 308
bond of love, and the wedding and no less indivisible garment of charity, which is indeed our chief garment, for it hideth all the shame and baseness of sin. This garment is not torn by men, but it is given by lot. Now this declareth to us the incomprehensible judgments of God, Who knoweth who are His, and whom He hath chosen, and whom He hath not chosen; who are to be clothed, and who are to be sent away in their nakedness. And to His elect, indeed, He giveth the garment of charity, by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost.

Moreover, from this we may draw spiritual instruction, that he who would be a true lover and follower of Christ, must be so stripped naked with Christ, and despoiled of all help or support, as not to keep even a thread of anything belonging to him, nor even to have anything whereon to lay his head. As Isaias saith, he must be purified in the fire of poverty and desolation, even as gold is proved in the fire, and as the grain of wheat is separated by repeated blows and shakings from the chaff. Even so, I say, must such a man be so utterly stripped naked, and unclothed of all spiritual coverings, (which by daily exercise he hath
put on, as to think them something belonging to him, or that he hath acquired them by his 309
own zeal and diligence,) until to himself, and in his own sight, he becometh wholly vile and nothing; and so can serve God with the same peace of mind and without any choice of his own, in want, and desolation, and affliction, as in delight, and consolation, and joy. And these garments, which he deemeth his own, and which he thinketh that he possesseth, as it were, by hereditary right, ought, in his eyes, to pass into the hands of others; that is to say, all his pure and religious life, and his spiritual garments, by which he believeth himself to

be adorned and glorified, ought to be torn to tatters by others, and treated with reproach, and contempt, and shame, and le himself held up as an impostor and a hypocrite, and his whole life judged to be full of deceit and hypocrisy. Thus together with Christ will he be numbered: with the wicked and the transgressors.

It was in this way that the disciples and friends of Christ have suffered persecutions, and all their holiest efforts and works have been held of no account, as a certain one amongst them hath said: “I suppose that God hath set us apostles the last of all, as it were, appointed to death, for we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. We are cursed,
and bless; we suffer persecution, and bear it; we are blasphemed, and entreat; we are made 310
as the refuse of the world, the offscouring of all things unto this day.” Thus must the noble grain of wheat lie hidden for a little while in the earth, and be worn away by divers storms, and die in itself, if it is to bring forth fruit. For it refuseth to be an Abel, whom the malice of a Cain doth not try. But how blessed a thing is this persecution of Cain, and the trouble which we suffer therefrom! How clearly by this winnowing is the grain separated from the chaff. How many proud minds remain unknown, as long as they are tried by no temptations or contempt, but which would certainly betray themselves, were they heavily touched. Hence the Prophet saith: “Touch the hills and they shall smoke.” And Isaac saith to Jacob: “Come hither, my son, that I may touch thee, and see whether thou art indeed my very son Esau, or not.”

But let us go back to the Cross of our Lord, and with great devotion and compassion look upon our Maker and Saviour, hanging so pitiably in agony, without friends, or any thing of His own, or any comfort, forsaken from on high, and from below, racked by pain of every kind within and without, despoiled of all that could soften His pains, while everything
happened to Him that could possibly make them greater. Let us look closely, I pray, at this 311
King of ours, so pitiable and forsaken. He weareth, indeed, His crown, and He hath a royal title, but where are His courtiers? Where is His camp? Where are His palaces? Of a truth He hangeth here under the sky of heaven. Where is His purple? Where are His robes, glittering with gold? Where His state, as becometh royal magnificence? Where, even, are His Body and His Blood? Of a surety His whole Body is consumed and wasted by the fire of love, as He Himself saith: “The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up.” His Blood sinners have drunk. What shall He give us, I ask, Who hath nothing left at all:—no, not the least thing, however little, on which He can lean His Head; Who hath no roof, no possession, no inheritance, no garments? All, all hath been taken away. Nevertheless, let us go up to this mountain of myrrh, and with the mourning turtle, let us fly up to the palm-tree of the Cross, and see if we can find any fruit. Of a truth, we shall find enough, and more than enough, if our earnestness in searching fail not. He hath still a tongue, to utter words of comfort, words of salvation, and instruction. And if that is not enough for us with which the thief was content,
let us go up yet a little higher. For He hath still His Heart left whole; with that He will pray 312

to His Father for us. He hath still consciousness, full of devotion, grace, and love. He will give us to drink of that wine, which He gave to His beloved disciple, who lay upon His breast. And if even this doth not satisfy us, see! He will gladly suffer His side to be transfixed, and His Heart to be pierced, and opened, and in the love of His burning Heart, He will give us His Blood to drink,—sweet draught, indeed, and pleasant exceedingly, for it is the draught of the love of God. Lastly, He will give us even His holy Soul, full of grace and merits, and adorned with all virtue. What more can we ask of our sweet God and Lord? Behold, He giveth all that He hath, all that He is; all that He can give. Then let us, too, give Him our whole selves in return.

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THE FORTIETH CHAPTER.

Jesus is attacked with blaspshemies.

Nowere sat not far from the Cross, the executioners, who kept guard over Christ, and waited for the end. And let us also wait for the death of Christ, not as they did, out of hatred, but with bitter sorrow, watching for our salvation to be ended by Christ; nor let us go away from the Cross, since our whole salvation is hanging thereon. A certain soul, glowing with love, hath said: "I sat under His shadow, Whom I desired, and His fruit is sweet to my mouth." And what can be sweeter to the soul that loveth, than after the distractions, and the labours, and the many troubles which happen to her in this valley of tears, whether she will or no, and which weary her, to take breath under the shadow of the health-giving Cross, and to refresh herself, and to collect her distracted senses, and to strengthen herself in her exhaustion with the delightful fruit of this tree, and to drink her fill of the torrent of her Beloved's Sacred Side, which floweth indeed with milk and honey? The Jewish people waited for the end: let us, too, persevere to the end, nor let us go aside from the cross until our salvation be accomplished thereon; for whoever shall persevere to the end, the same shall be saved; and in like manner, let it only be together with our life that we finish 314
our penance.

The Jews watched for the end, because neither by blood, nor cruelty, nor by torture, could they glut their rage. And because in their serpent hearts they could think no more of any kind of torment, whereby to torture Christ's Body; at the last, their hands failing, they began to crucify our Lord with their tongues. O unutterable wickedness! O unheard-of hatred! O cruelty without measure! In their devilish rage they wagged their sacrilegious heads, and spat upon Him, and said: "Vah! Thou Who destroyest the temple, and in three days buildest it again!" Oh! thine immense blindness, thou wicked Jew! Thou believest not what thou seest before thy very eyes! Already—now, even now, is the temple destroyed, and it is thou who hath destroyed it; but wait for three days, and thou shalt see it built again! O unutterable perversity and wickedness of the Jews, who put forth their whole strength, that, as they had worn away His Body, and reduced it almost to nothing, so also they might utterly blot out His glorious Name! But the more eagerly they tried to do this, so much the more did they exalt Christ, and add to His Name greater splendour and glory. They thought, indeed, that they could utterly blot it out by a shameful death, but they only raised it up the higher, as that of a judge upon his throne. With their own hands they built for Him a column, on 315
which was placed the title of His Royal Majesty; and not only could they not suppress His Name within their own nation, but they spread it abroad all the more among all nations, and caused it to be extolled; so that they who before had not known Christ might read and know that He was the very King of Israel. Wherefore, by their very insults they honoured Christ, and against their will added praise to praise. For they were so full of malice and

wickedness, that if they had known aught of evil against Him, beyond all doubt they would have brought it forth, and cast it against Him. But because in that most pure gold, so many times tried in the fire of affliction, and of the Cross, they had been unable to find any dross, they tried to cast shame upon His virtues, and His glorious miracles, and His Divine Name. O most blind Jews! how just do ye declare our Lord to be, when ye have nothing in your malice to reproach Him with, save what is pure, and holy, and divine; as, for example, that He had: raised the dead to life, that He had given health to the sick, that He had done marvellous works; in a word, that He was the Son of God.

Now this we too hold with undoubting faith. For had He not been Very God, of a surety 316
He could not have worked these wonders. When ye saw these great wonders, ye would not believe; now, therefore, ye have been utterly caught in your mad wickedness, so that against your will ye confess that "He saved others." Ye throw it in His teeth that He is the King of Israel, as we saw when speaking of the title of the Cross. And hereafter ye shall see as your stern Judge, sentencing you to everlasting fire, Him Whom you have just condemned to the death of the Cross. Ye make it a reproach to Him that He hath God for His Father. Within three days ye shall indeed prove the truth of this, when God the Father shall raise Him from the dead, and yet again, when Christ shall Himself ascend to His Father in heaven.

But now let every man weigh with himself, and meditate with great compassion and sorrow, how the tender Heart of Christ must have been afflicted, when He, Whose nature is goodness itself, beheld all this hateful and obstinate wickedness of the Jews, and at the same time knew, by His divine wisdom, how it was from the malice and the hatred of their hearts that they vomited forth these reproaches and blasphemies. Of a truth, if over and above this they could have heaped upon Him aught of reproach or of wrong, in nowise would they have shrunk therefrom. Then, indeed, could our tender Lord say in His Heart: 317
"My people, what have I done to thee, or how have I troubled thee? Why art thou so cruel, so furious against the God Who made thee? Why art thou so made of rock and stone, that My warm Blood, which thou seest falling on the ground like water, and at the very touch of which the rocks themselves are torn asunder, cannot soften thy heart nor warm it, no, nor even touch it? See how the senseless elements, and creatures without reason, show signs of sorrow; and thou, My people, whom I have enlightened with a singular knowledge of My Godhead, whom I have taught the law and spiritual ceremonies, whom I have treated with such kindness, hast lifted thyself up against thy God, and hast forgotten all His benefits.

"It was for thy sake that I smote Egypt with many plagues; thou, on the contrary, hast smitten Me with many blows. Marvellously did I lead thee out of Egypt; I dried up the Red Sea beneath thy footsteps; I laid low thine enemies without any labour to thee; but thou hast delivered Me to Pilate, and eagerly plotted for My death. In the wilderness for forty years I fed thee with manna; thou hast given Me gall and vinegar to drink. I led thee through the wilderness; by day I sheltered thee from the heat with a cloud, by night I gave thee light in 318

the pillar of fire; thy garments were not worn out: but thou hast led Me cross-laden unto death, and hast stripped Me of My garments, and placed Me naked on the Cross. I honoured thee with a royal sceptre; but thou hast crowned Met with thorns, and given Me a reed for My sceptre; and after having mocked Me, killed Me. What can I do to thee, that at last thy malice may cease? My Body and My Blood I gave to thee, and My fresh fair nature I suffered thee well nigh to wear away. For three and thirty years I laboured for thy conversion, and thou: wouldst not hear Me. Now, at least, I pray thee, let My bitter Passion; and numberless Wounds, and burning tears, soften thee, whom My words could not turn; let My warm Blood warm thee, whom so many of My miracles could not touch."

But those wretched ones, like mad dogs, cried out in answer: "If Thou art the Son of God, come down from the Cross!"

O Jesus! unvanquished Lion; heed them not; place no faith in their deceitful words. For they who would not believe, even if one were to rise from the dead, would not now believe, wert Thou to come down from the Cross! Come not down, good Jesus; but finish the work
of our salvation upon Thy Cross, for all our salvation lieth in Thy death. Suffer in patience, 319
meanwhile, their blasphemies and reproaches, and teach us the power of charity and patience, by praying for Thine enemies. In this the Jews showed themselves to be the children and disciples of the devil, by following their father, who had already before this said to Christ: "If Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down!" But, good Jesus, come not down, but rather let the prayer of Thy Heart mount upwards to Thy Father. Let this, Thy innocent Blood, reconcile the Father to us, and plead from the Cross for us; and then afterwards go up Thyself to Thy Father in heaven, and prepare a place for us, and open to us an entrance into heaven!

And now, O most merciful Father of heaven, look down upon the torn coat of Thy beloved Son Joseph, which He left in the hands of the wicked woman, that is, of the adulterous race of the Jews, choosing rather to lose His own garment than His innocence, and to be stripped of the covering of His body, and to be cast into prison, than to consent to her deceitful words.

Moreover, at the same time, both the chief priests and the elders persecuted our Lord
with blasphemies and reproaches, saying: "He saved others, Himself He cannot save. If He 320
be the King of Israel, let Him come down from the Cross." But Christ dwelt not on those blasphemies, but bore them in patience, desiring to fulfil the works of perfect love, not desiring to save Himself, that He might save many, and choosing to continue in those horrible pains, that He might deliver all men from torments everlasting. From this we may clearly gather how faithfully our Lord Jesus worked out our salvation, when on account neither of the bitterness of His pain, nor of the calumnies and reproaches of the Jews, nor of His Mother's measureless woes, nor for any cause whatever, even for a moment, did He pause in the work of our salvation, with which He was then engaged upon the Cross. And we, on

the other hand, how often are we called away by light causes from the service of God, and from earnestness in prayer, and fasting, and watching, and acts of penance! How easily do we wound charity, when at one little word we lay aside patience, not considering all the shame, and reproach, and ignominy, and contempt, which the King of Glory suffered from His own chosen people. And yet most certainly was He grievously tormented in heart at these things. Pitiably doth He complain by the mouth of His Prophet of the sharpness of this internal pain: “And, indeed, if Mine enemy had spoken evil against Me, I would indeed 321
have borne it. But thou, the man of My peace, in whom I hoped, and who eat My bread, hath magnified deceit upon Me, and lifted up his head against Me!”

O how sorely stricken was that meek Lamb, when His own peculiar people blasphemed Him, and visited Him with reproach and calumny, since, instead, they ought rather to have praised, and loved, and thanked Him, because He, the true God, had not refused, for man’s salvation, to die so shameful a death.

Nor was it only against the Son of God that these wicked ones blasphemed, but, moreover, they let loose their tongues, as so many ready instruments of the devil, in order to wrong and blaspheme His Father, saying: “He trusted in God: let Him deliver Him now, if He will, for He said: I am the Son of God!” O wicked and impious people, whither hath the evil spirit led thee, that thou shouldst throw in the teeth of the Father of mercies His own goodness? Did He do thee any wrong, when He opened His Fatherly bosom, and poured forth the riches of His grace, and sent His only One upon earth, to take upon Him human nature from thy own race, in order that He might go in search of the lost sheep of thy house, 322
and heal them,—and by giving Himself up to death for thy salvation, might pay thy heavy debt in the precious Blood of His beloved Son? And in return for these His benefits, thou vomitest out blasphemies upon Him, as if He could not help His Son, Who, although He died Himself, will one day recall all the dead by one word to life, and Who, also, by a word, hath made the heavens and the earth. Let us consider what a grievous cross it must have been to our Lord Jesus to hear such blasphemy against His Father, knowing how grievously it stirred up His Father’s anger, and how horrible was the judgment hanging over them. Of a truth, all His bowels were moved to pity at the mad blindness of His people, and with a last voice He cried out to the Father: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?”

O incomprehensible goodness of Christ! He did now, what formerly He had taught when He said, that we should love our enemies, and pray for them who persecute us, and what the Prophet had long ago foretold of Him: “They who loved Me spoke evil against Me, but I prayed.” They cursed Him, and He blessed them: and although so great was their wickedness as not to admit of excuse; nevertheless, so far as He could, He made excuse for them to the Father, saying: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?” O 323
marvellous power of this prayer, poured forth, as it was, in such anguish, and with such

love! For when others, by reason of the vehemence of pain, easily forget even their dearest friends, and cannot pray even for themselves, Christ prayed for His enemies. Yet this His prayer was poured forth not only for them, who then crucified Him with their hands, and blasphemed Him with their tongues, but also for all those who still crucify our Lord Jesus by their wicked actions, and blaspheme Him by their sins. These, of a truth, know not what they do; for they are seized with a five-fold blindness. First, they know not how fearfully they stir up the power of the just Judge, by despising the commandments of so mighty a Lord. Secondly, they know not how merciful a Father they offend, how faithful a protector they abandon, Whose friendship they lose. Thirdly, they do not know how shamefully they disfigure their own fair and noble souls, which have been made to God's image. Fourthly, they do not know how horrible are the torments of hell, which they deserve. Fifthly, they do not know how great is the glory and the joy of heaven, which they lose.

Here we may learn that we should firmly persevere in those crosses which God permitteth to come upon us, and with S. Andrew the Apostle, suffer not ourselves to be loosened
therefrom by men, but that we should remain with constancy upon the cross, until our Lord 324
Himself loosen and free us therefrom. Nor, either by reason of the grievousness of the cross, or the reproaches and scoffs of men, or for the sake of relief and comfort, should we go down from the cross, when we have once taken it up. For this would be to consent to the devil, who is ever whispering in our ears: "Come down from the cross, and save thyself." Some men forsake the cross of some light affliction, and throw aside their patience, and for some little word or slight adversity, cease to walk in Christ's footsteps, in which they had begun to tread. Others leave the cross of holy religion, for some small temptation, after they have entered thereon. Others, again, put off the cross of penance, for the sake of some little pleasure of the world, and in order to be comforted for a very little while. These have forsaken Christ's-footsteps, and given themselves to the devil, who is ever crying in the hearts of men, that they should come down from the cross, and save themselves, and satisfy their pleasures and lusts, and indulge the affections of their nature, and refresh their spirit meanwhile with vain comforts and delights. "It is not thy business," he saith, "to practise hard penance, to
observe the austerity of religion, and to die daily to thyself. Wilt thou kill thyself! Come 325
down quickly from the cross and save thyself."

THE FORTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

A devout confession and prayer for sins.

O Jesus, inexhaustible abyss of patience, Whose nature is goodness, to Whom it belongeth ever to have mercy, and to spare, behold I, the greatest of sinners, whose sins are more in number than the sand of the sea, throw myself at Thy pierced feet, waiting for Thy immense goodness, and Thy great mercy, which Thou didst show Thy tormentors, when they fastened Thee to the Cross, and humbly trusting that Thou wilt not refuse me this same grace. Wherefore, with great love I embrace Thy holy Cross with my arms, and with all lowliness, and devotion, and reverence, I adore Thee, my God, and Lord, and Saviour, hanging upon the Cross, crowned with thorns, pierced with nails, racked in all Thy members, covered with blood, disfigured with wounds, despised, mocked at, forsaken, full of all pain 326
within and without, tormented by the draught of vinegar and gall.

O Jesus, Eternal Sweetness, I, a foul sinner, in the bitter grief of my heart, confess to Thee my grievous sin, and that I am the cause of Thy bitter Passion, and have inflicted upon Thee these Thy grievous torments, by my grievous sins. Of a truth, Thou hast suffered far more from me than from those who crucified Thee, for the wrong and the contempt which Thou foresawest that I should bring upon Thy Father, gave Thee more grievous pain than those cruel wounds of Thy Body. Nor is it once only that I have crucified Thee, but my whole life long. Of Thy tormentors, indeed, it is written: “Had they known, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory,” but I, indeed, wicked that I am, have known Thee, and yet have crucified Thee times without number, and I have wounded and mocked Thee, and shed even Thy precious Blood. For why did Thy precious Blood flow forth so abundantly from Thy Body, except because, like the grape, Thou wert pressed out under the grievous weight of my sins? Why were Thy wounds so many, except because of my numberless sins? For because I myself have increased my sins, Thou also didst multiply Thy pains. And what 327
else is the gall and vinegar which Thou drankest, but my bitter and wicked actions, which I offered to Thy lips? From whom hast Thou suffered so many mockeries as from me, when I feared not to anger Thee, the King of Israel, yea, and I confess, of heaven and of earth, and so adorable and worshipful a Lord, by despising Thy holy commandments! What else have I done to Thee, except with the sacrilegious Jews to blaspheme Thee, and say: “Come down from the Cross; never more will I consent to sin, or transgress Thy law:” and then straightway I have crucified Thee again. Yet not even after sins such as these, and after all the wrongs I have done Thee, do I in any way despair of Thy grace and mercy; but full of trust, I confess to Thee my wanderings, for many are the signs of Thy mercy. Of a truth, I have fastened Thy feet with rough nails, that they should not turn away from me, but wait with long-suffering, until I do penance. Thy arms are stretched out to embrace me; Thy head is bowed down to kiss me, and to hear my suppliant prayers. Thy Heart is opened, and Thou invitest

me to enter into it, promising me a draught of new wine, that my heart may be made glad, for Thou sayest: “Come to Me, all ye who labour in the tillage of My vineyard; and prepare a pleasant bed for Me. Come to Me, all ye who have begun to fight manfully against your sins, and who are striving to avoid this world, given up, as it were, to vice. Come to Me, all 328
ye who labour, and are burdened with the load of sin, with the weight of penance, and the cross of affliction, and I will refresh you, and feed you; and I will give you to drink out of My glorious soul, that red wine, which I have mingled for you, for were it not diluted, it would be stronger than you could bear.”

Wherefore, O good Jesus, I wait, not only for that love which Thou showest to Thy friends, but for that, too, which Thou showest to Thine enemies, and I contemplate that loving-kindness of Thine, with which Thou prayest so lovingly for those who crucified and blasphemed Thee. I beseech Thee, most tender Lord, let this Thy prayer be of profit to my wretched soul. For although I have crucified Thee, yet was not this done by me with the same malice as by the wicked Jews; but overcome by human frailty, I have done it. Nor have I sinned that I might treat Thee with contempt, but that I might gratify my senses. Whatever sin, then, I may have committed by the consent of delight, I will correct with the bitterness of penance, and I will wash away with hot streams of tears. I cry out to Thee, indeed, but not as the Jews: “If Thou art the Son of God, save Thyself;” but, “because Thou art the Eternal Son of God, save me Thy servant.” I pierce Thee not with nails, I transfix not Thy 329
side with a spear; but I wound Thy Heart by my prayers, and the fiery darts of my desires, and tender love. Oil! for even one little drop, I pray Thee, from Thy open side, to fall down into my sick and wounded soul, and then I shall be saved. O glorious King of heaven and earth, remember me, for now Thou hast come into Thy kingdom. O true Son of God, Who sittest now at the Right Hand of Thy Father, remember my poor soul, which is held captive in the prison of this world. Cause me to hear a word of mercy, even that word of comfort which Thou spakest to the thief, when Thou saidst: “This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise.” And this will be soon done, if Thou drawest me away from out of the midst of sin. For then straightway will my soul be joined to Thee; that it may rest in Thee, Who art the paradise of spiritual delights, the rest and full content of the blessed. For in Thee, the paradise of pleasure, have we everlasting rest, and being, and nothing can cast us out therefrom, save sin alone. Take, then, sin away, O Thou Who art the Lamb without spot, that takest away the sins of the world, and then I shall be made one with Thee, and shall most truly be in paradise. 330

THE FORTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

To stir up the soul to praise God.

Nowen, O my soul, and as many as have been redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ, come, and with inward compassion and fervent devotion, let us go up to the blessed palm-tree of the Cross, for it is all laden with the fairest fruit. Even as the busy bee, let us pass from wound to wound, for they are all full of honey. Let us search into and weigh with exceeding care-the sacred words of Christ, which He uttered on the Cross; for everything is medicinal and good which cometh from this blessed tree. All our salvation, all our health, all our life, all our glory, are centred in the Cross of our Lord and Saviour; and as the Apostle saith: "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him." And that we may not be found ungrateful for such immense benefits, let us stir up heaven and earth, and all things that in them are, and call them to our help, in order to praise and bless God, and give Him thanks. Let us invite them to come and gaze on this marvellous spectacle, and say: "Magnify our Lord with me, for He hath done wonderful things. Praise and bless the Lord with me, for 331
His mercy over us is great." O ye angelic spirits, come up, I pray you, with me, to Mount Calvary, and behold your King Solomon on His throne, and with the diadem wherewith His Mother hath crowned Him. Let us weep before the Lord Who made us, Who is Himself the Lord our God. O all mortals, and as many as are members of Christ, behold, I beseech you, with tearful eyes, your Redeemer, Who hangeth on high. See if any sorrow can be compared with His sorrow. Acknowledge the cruelty of your sins, which required such satisfaction. Go to every part of Christ's Body, and ye will find nothing but wounds and blood. Cry to Him with mournful voice, and say: "O Jesus, our redemption, love, and desire, what mercy is this that hath overcome Thee, that Thou shouldst bear our sins, and suffer a cruel death, in order to snatch us from death, even death everlasting!"

And Thou, O God, the Father Almighty of heaven, look down from Thy high sanctuary on Thy innocent Son Joseph, sold, and wrongfully betrayed into the hands of blood-thirsty men, and given over to a shameful death. See whether this be Thy Son's garment or not. Of a truth, an evil beast hath devoured Him. The blood of our sins is sprinkled over His gar-
ments, and all the coverings of His good name and reputation are defiled thereby. See how 332
Thy holy Child hath been condemned with the wicked, how Thy Royal Son hath been crowned with thorns. Behold His guiltless hands, which have known no sin, dropping with blood; His sacred feet, which have never turned from the path of justice, pierced with a cruel nail; His naked and helpless side transfixed by a sharp lance; His fair face, on which the angels desire to look, all utterly debased and devoid of all beauty; His blessed Heart, which no stain of unclean thought hath ever touched, pressed down by inward woe. Behold, O loving Father, Thy sweet Son, all stretched out on the harp of the Cross, and harping blessings on Thee with all His members. Wherefore, I earnestly beseech Thee, O my God, to pardon me,

for the sake of the Passion of Thy Son; whatever sin I may have committed in my members. Look, O merciful Father, on Thy only-begotten Son, that, Thou mayest have pity on Thy servant: As often as that red Blood of; Thy Son speaketh in Thy sight, so often do Thou wash me from every stain of sin; and as many times as Thou patiently beholdest the wounds of this Thy Son, so many times open to me the bosom of Thy fatherly mercy. Behold now, O tender Father, how Thy most obedient Son crieth not out: “Bind my hands and my feet, lest I should rebel against Thee;” but how of His own free will He stretcheth out His hands and 333
His feet, and gladly suffereth them to be pierced with nails. Look down, I pray Thee, not on the brazen serpent hanging upon a pole for Israel’s salvation, but Thy only Son, hanging on the Cross for the salvation of all mankind. It is no longer Moses, who stretcheth forth his hands to heaven, that the thunder, and the lightning, and the other plagues of Egypt may cease, but it is Thy beloved Son, Who lovingly stretcheth forth His bleeding arms to Thee, that Thine anger may depart from the whole race of man. No longer do Aaron and Hur hold up the hands of Moses, that he may pray more perseveringly for Israel; but rough, rude nails have fastened the hands and feet of Thy only-begotten Son to the Cross, that He may wait with long-suffering for our penance, and that He may take us back into His grace, and that He may not in His anger turn Himself away from our prayers. This, indeed, is that faithful David, who now tighteneth the harp strings of His Body, and maketh sweet melody before Thee, singing to Thee the sweetest song that hath been ever sung to Thee: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” This is that High-Priest, Who by His own Blood bath entered into the Holy of Holies, to offer Himself a peace-offering for the sins of the whole world. This is that guiltless Lamb, Who hath washed us in His own precious 334
Blood, Who never knew sin, but Who hath taken away all the sins of the world.

From the treasury, then, of this Passion, I borrow the price of my debt, and all its merits I count out before Thee in payment of what I owe. For all that He hath done, He hath done in my nature, and for my sake. O gracious Father, if Thou weighest all my sins on one side of the balance, and placest in the other the Passion of Thy Son, the latter will outweigh the former. For what sin can be so great that the guiltless Blood of Thy Son lath not washed away? What pride, or disobedience, or lust, is so unbridled and lifted up, that such lowliness, obedience and poverty cannot do away with? O, merciful Father, accept the actions of Thy beloved Son, and pardon the wanderings of Thy wicked servant; for the innocent Blood of our Brother Abel crieth to Thee from the Cross, not for vengeance, but for grace and mercy, saying: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

335

THE FORTY-THIRD CHAPTER.

Jesus saveth the thief.

Nowe thieves which were crucified together with Jesus, these also uttered blasphemies against Him. But after a little, he who hung on Christ's right hand, when he saw His great patience and long-suffering, with which He so lovingly prayed to His Father for them who heaped such shame upon Him, and fearfully tormented Him, became utterly changed, and began to be moved by exceeding sorrow and repentance for his sins. And this he showed outwardly, reproving by his words his fellow-thief, who still continued to blaspheme, and saying: "Dost not thou fear God, seeing that thou, too, art near to death?"

"Although from obstinate confidence thou fearest not men, and thinkest nothing of thy bodily pains, yet surely thou must fear God, and this, too, at the last moment of thy life, for He hath power to destroy both thy body and soul in the hell of fire. And although we suffer like punishment with Him, yet far different are our merits. We, indeed, suffer justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done no evil." He, then, who but just now was a blasphemer, is now a confessor and a preacher, distinguishing good from evil, blaming the sinner, and making excuse for the innocent one; he who a little before was
an unbelieving thief, is now the confessor of God Almighty. O good Jesus, this is the sudden 336
change of Thy Right Hand, at which he hung. Thy Right Hand touched him inwardly, and straightway he is changed into another man. In this, O Lord, Thou hast declared Thy patience, for out of a stone Thou hast raised up a child unto Abraham. Of a truth, the good thief received the light of faith from no other source than from that bright light on the candlestick of the Cross, which, shining there in darkness, dispersed the darkness of night. But what doth this mean, except that our Lord Jesus, out of His immense goodness alone, looked with the eyes of His mercy upon him, although He found no merit in him, save what it pleased Him in His goodness to give? For even as God out of His goodness alone giveth unto His elect what none hath a right to claim, so He bestoweth on the wicked what is due to them from the equity of justice. Wherefore David also saith: "He saved me, because He desired me." And this was why that thief, before our Lord touched his heart with the rays of His grace and love, blasphemed Christ along with the other thief, thus proving in truth what first of all he did of himself, and then what was afterwards worked in him by grace. At first,
indeed, he did as the other, for he, too, was a child of wrath; but when Christ's precious 337
Blood, the price of our redemption, was poured forth, and paid to the Father in payment of our debt, then at that happy moment he asked of God an alms for his own good, and no sooner asked than received it. For how doth one alms lessen that measureless treasure! Or how could our tender Lord, Whose property it is to have mercy, have refused it him? Indeed, He gave more than that thief asked for. Yet how could that thief avoid the intense heat of the burning fire which was so near him! Of a truth, this was the fire, which had been sent

down by the Father from heaven upon earth, which for long indeed had smouldered, but which now, kindled afresh, and fed by the wood of the cross, and sprinkled with the oil of mercy, and blown into a blaze by the breath, as it were, of the reproaches and blasphemies of the Jews, threw up its flames to heaven, whereby that thief was wholly kindled and set on fire, and his love became strong as death, so that he said: “I, indeed, suffer no grievous punishment, for I more than deserve it; but that this innocent one, who hath no sin in Him, should be so tormented, contrary to what is just and good, this, of a truth, addeth grievous sorrow to my sorrow.” O admirable faith of this thief! He despised all the punishment that could be inflicted on him; he feared not the fury of the people, who, like mad dogs, were 338
barking out their rage against Jesus; he heeded not the chief priests; he dreaded not all the executioners with their divers kinds of torments and weapons; but before them all, with a heart that knew no fear, he confessed Christ to be the true Son of God, and the Lord of the whole universe; and, at the same time, he confounded the Jews, by confessing that our Lord had done no evil, and that therefore they had wrongfully crucified Him. O wonderful faith! O mighty constancy! O incomprehensible love of this poor thief, that cast out all fear from him. He had, indeed, well drunk, and was drunken with that new wine, which in the wine-press of the Cross had been pressed out of that sweet grape-cluster, Christ Jesus, and therefore without shame he confessed Christ before all the people. From the very beginning of the Passion the apostles and disciples had all fled away, and forsaken Christ: S. Peter himself, terrified at the voice of one woman-servant, had denied Christ, yet not even in death did this poor thief forsake our Lord, but confessed Him before all those armed men to be the Lord of heaven. Who can worthily celebrate the virtues of this man? Who can tell of them? Who hath taught him so quickly that faith of his, and the clear knowledge of all virtues, except the very Wisdom of the Father, Christ Jesus, Who hung near him on the Cross? Him Whom, 339
even from the promises made to the patriarchs, and from the confirmed oracles of the prophets, and from the teaching of the scriptures, and from the interpretation of figures, the Jews could not, or would not know, this poor thief learnt to know by penance. He confessed Christ to be the Son of God, although he saw Him before him full of wretchedness, and want, and torments, and dying of human weakness; and he confessed Him at a time when the apostles, who had seen His signs, and wonders, and marvellous miracles, denied Him. The nails were then holding his hands and feet immoveable upon the cross, nor had he anything free about him, except his heart and tongue; yet he offered to God all that he could freely give Him, so that, in the words of Scripture, “with his heart he believed unto justice, and with his mouth confessed Christ unto salvation.” O utterly infinite and unsearchable mercy of God! what kind of man was he when he was driven to the cross, and what when he left it? Not that we should ascribe this change to his own cross, but to the goodness and power of Christ crucified. He came to the cross polluted with another’s blood; he was taken down from it cleansed by the Blood of Christ. He came to the Cross still cruel-hearted 340

and full of anger, and upon the Cross he became so meek of heart and compassionate, that he bewailed the sufferings of others more than his own. One member alone was left to him, and he came at the last hour to work in God's vineyard, yet so zealously did he labour that he had finished his work before the others, and first of all received his reward. He acted, indeed, like a just man, for, first of all, he accused himself and confessed his sins, saying: "And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds." Secondly, he made excuse for Christ, and confessed Him to be the Just One, when he said: "But this Man, what evil hath He done?" Thirdly, he showed forth brotherly love, for he said: "Dost not thou fear God?" Fourthly, with all his members,—at least, with all he could offer,—and with a look of love, and a devout heart, and a lowly spirit, he turned to Christ, and fervently prayed: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." By this prayer he proclaimed Christ to be the Lord of heaven, and therefore Very God, for heaven is God's alone. He beheld nothing in Christ, save poverty, pain, and blood, with death coming over Him, none of which signs, speak in any way of the Lord God, but quite the contrary; yet he said firmly:
"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Great, then, was the justice, 341
and humility, and resignation which he showed forth in this prayer, since he asked only for a little remembrance of himself, acknowledging himself unworthy to ask anything great. Nor did he pray for the salvation of his body, for he gladly desired to die for his sins; and it was more pleasant for him to die with Christ, than to live any longer. Nor did he pray to be preserved by our Lord from the pains of hell or of purgatory, nor did he ask for the kingdom of heaven, but he resigned himself utterly to God's will, and offered himself all to Christ, to do with him what He would. Nothing, then, save grace and mercy, did he pray for in his humility, even as David prayed; saying: "Deal with Thy servant according to Thy mercy." Wherefore, because he had humbly and wisely prayed, the Eternal Wisdom, that readeth the hearts of them who pray, heard his prayer, and opening wide the rich treasures of His grace, bestowed upon him far more than he had dared to ask.

O incomprehensible goodness of God! how clearly dost Thou declare by this that Thou desirest not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn to Thee, and live. Thou hast shown forth by this, and fulfilled what of old Thou didst promise by the mouth of Thy
Prophet; saying: "In the hour whensoever the sinful man shall mourn for his sins, I will re- 342
member his iniquity no more." Not many years of severe penance didst Thou impose upon him, not many pains of purgatory for the expiation and satisfaction of his sins; but as if Thou hadst utterly forgotten his evil deeds, and couldst see nothing but virtue in him, Thou saidst to him: "To-day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." O immense mercy of God! our tender Lord in His pity forgot all the evil deeds which had been so numberless in that poor thief, and pardoned him when he repented, while to the good in him, which was small indeed, He gave so noble and magnificent a reward.

Exceeding rich is our loving God, nor doth He stand in need of our goods; but He seeketh for a heart which turneth to Him with lowliness and resignation, such as He found in this poor thief. For He saith Himself: “Be ye turned unto Me, and I will turn unto you.” When, therefore, this thief so bravely and efficaciously turned himself to God, straightway his prayer was not only received, but heard. For our Lord rejected not his prayer, nor said: “See how I hang here in grievous pain, and I behold before My eyes My Mother in sore affliction, standing in the midst of this great agony, to whom as yet I have not spoken one word, so that to hear thee now would not be just.” Nothing like this, I say, did our Lord 343
speak to the thief; nay, rather, He heard his prayer at once, and spoke in answer that sweet word: “Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in paradise.” O tender goodness, O incomprehensible mercy of God! O great prudence of the thief! He saw that the treasures of his Lord lay open wide, and were scattered about on all sides. Who then should forbid him to take as much as would pay his Lord’s debt? And O, the damnable hardness of the wicked thief, whom neither the reproof of his fellow, nor the patience of Christ, nor so many signs of love and mercy that shone forth in Christ, could soften and convert! He saw, indeed, that alms abounded at the rich man’s gate, that more was given than asked for, yet was he too proud and obstinate to wish to ask. He saw that life was given, that the kingdom of heaven was being bestowed, yet would he not bend his heart to desire them, therefore he shall not have them. He preferred blasphemies and curses, and they shall come upon him, and that for ever and ever.

These new first-fruits of the grape, which our Lord Jesus obtained on the wood of the Cross, from our unfruitful soil, after much sweat of His brow and abundant watering of His 344
own precious Blood, He sent to His heavenly Father with great joy, as a precious gift, by the heavenly messengers, the holy angels. But if there is joy amongst the angels of God over one sinner doing penance, what will be the joy amongst them, what the exultation, at the salvation of this thief, of whom they had almost lost hope, and thought that he had perished? With what joy, let us imagine, did the Father of heaven receive these first-fruits of the harvest of His Son’s Passion? But to Christ Himself, although He, too, was able to get some joy at this conversion, there came therefrom still greater affliction, for by His Divine wisdom He easily foresaw that this thief would be to many the cause of damnation; to those, namely, who make up their mind to pass their whole life in sin, hoping, nevertheless, to obtain forgiveness and grace at the moment of death; a most foolish thing indeed, for never do we read in the Scripture that it hath happened thus to any man. Truly, they who have sought after God only when compelled by necessity, will not, it is to be feared, find Him at hand in their hour of need.

Meanwhile, no man can trust in God too much; nor hath any man ever been forsaken by Him, who turned to Him with his whole heart, and leant upon Him with loving trust.

345

THE FORTY-FOURTH CHAPTER.

Jesus addresseth His sorrow-stricken Mother.

There stood also by the Cross of Jesus His most holy and ever-Virgin Mother Mary, not, indeed, that His pains might be lightened and moderated thereby, but that they might be increased in no small measure. For if any creature could have brought comfort to our Lord as He hung upon the Cross, none would have been so fitted for this as His most blessed Mother. But because it had been decreed that Christ should die the bitterest of deaths, and close His Passion without any consolation or relief, but with true resignation, His Mother's presence brought no comfort with it, but rather added to His pain, for her pains were thereby joined to His, and thus He drew therefrom still more abundant matter for cruel suffering.

Who then, O good Jesus, can find out by meditation how great was Thy inward grief, when, for Thou knowest the hearts of all, Thou sawest all the bowels and members of Thy 346
holy Mother racked by inward compassion in like manner with Thee upon the Cross, and fastened thereto by nails, and her tender Heart, and true Mother's breast, pierced with the sword of sharp sorrow, her face deadly pale, while it told of all the anguish of her soul, and herself well nigh dead, without being able to die. When Thou sawest her burning tears, flowing down abundantly like sweet rivers upon her gracious cheeks, over her whole face, as so many witnesses to Thee that she shared in Thy sorrow and love; when Thou heardest, too, her pitiable groans, pressed out from her under her weight of woe; when, moreover, Thou beheldest that same tender Mother, wholly melted away by the heat of love, utterly dissolved in tears, her strength utterly failing her, exhausted and worn by the torment of Thy Passion, which wasted her away; Oh! of a truth, all this was a new affliction to Thee on Thy Cross, and itself a new cross. For Thou alone, by the lance of Thy compassion, hast searched into the weight and grievousness of her woes, which to all men are simply beyond all understanding. And this, indeed, greatly added to the pain of Thy Passion, because not only in Thy Body, but also in Thy Mother's Heart Thou wert crucified, for her cross was Thy Cross, and Thine was hers.

Oh! how bitter, sweet Jesus, was Thy Passion! Thy outward pain was indeed great, but 347
far more grievous was Thy inward pain, which Thy Heart conceived at Thy Mother's anguish and distress. Now it was, it is clear, that the sword of sorrow pierced her through and through, for the Queen of martyrs was fearfully and mortally wounded in that part which is impassible, that is, in her soul; and she bore the death of the Cross in that which could not die, suffering all the more her grievous inward death, as outward death departed farther from her. Who, O most loving Mother, can tell, or worthily conceive in mind, the immense sorrows of thy soul, or thy inward woe? For Him Whom without pain thou broughtest forth, as the blessed Mother, free from the curse of our first mother Eve, and who, instead of the pains of troublesome labour, wert filled with jubilee of spirit, and who for thy refreshment didst

catch with thine ears the sweet melody of the angels, as they praised thy Son, even Him hast thou now seen killed before thine eyes with such exceeding cruelty and tyranny. How manifold was that sorrow of thine, which at His birth thou didst happily escape, when thou sawest thy blessed and only Son hanging in such fearful pain upon the Cross, before that cruel and raging crowd, who heaped upon Him all the insults, and afflictions, and shame that they could think of in their minds; when thou sawest Him Whom thou didst carry in 348 thy chaste womb without any burden, so inhumanly stretched upon the Cross, and pierced with nails; when thou sawest His sacred arms, with which He had so often lovingly clasped thee, stretched out so that they could not move, covered all over with red Blood, His adorable Head also pierced with sharp thorns, and His whole Body but one streaming wound; and all the while it was not given to thee to wipe those wounds of His, or anoint them. What must have been thy sorrow, when thou sawest Him, Whom, times without number, thou hadst laid on thy virgin bosom, that He might take His rest, now without even the smallest thing on which to lean His sacred Head; and Him Whom thou hadst fostered with the milk of thy holy breasts, now tormented with vinegar and gall. Oh! how that Mother's heart of thine was pressed in the press of the Passion, when thou beheldest with thy chaste eyes His fair face so pitiably disfigured, so that there was no beauty therein, and nothing whereby He could be distinguished. How did the wave of affliction, O sweet Mother, beat against, and flow over thy soul, yea, and utterly overwhelm it! Of a truth, if even a devout man cannot, without unutterable sorrow and compassion, turn over in his mind the Passion of thy Son, what must have been thy cross, thy affliction, who wast His Mother, and sawest it with thine 349 own eyes? If, to many of the friends of God, and to many who love God, thy Son's Passion is as great a pain as if they themselves suffered it; and if these, by inward compassion, are crucified with thy Son, how fearfully, even unto death, must thou have been inwardly crucified, when not only thou didst weigh with thyself and search into thy Son's outward and inward pains in thy most devout heart, but didst see them even with thy bodily eyes? For what is any man's love for thy Son compared with thy love? Never did any mother so love her child as thou didst love thy Son. And if S. Paul, who loved so much, could say out of his burning love and deep compassion for thy Son: "I am fastened with Christ upon the Cross, and I bear about the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body," how much more wert thou crucified together with Him, and didst inwardly receive all His wounds, being made, in some sort of way, an image and likeness of thy Crucified Son?

If, moreover, they who fervently love God, so earnestly seek and thirst after His glory, that as often as they perceive that God is offended, or any wrong is done Him, they are afflicted with as great inward grief, and are tormented with as great pain, as if they themselves had received some deadly wound; how exceedingly then must thou, the most faithful of all 350 mothers, and who lovedst God most fervently, have been afflicted, when thou sawest thy dearest and only Son, nay, thy God and Lord, so shamefully blasphemed, despised, and

mocked? If, lastly, those Jewish deceivers and hypocrites, when they heard any blasphemy, rent their garments, as if in proof of their sorrow, how must thy tender heart have been rent for sorrow, when thou both sawest and heardest all those accursed and horrible wrongs, and reproaches, and blasphemies darted forth against thy Son? For thus saith the Lord: "Rend your hearts, and not your garments." And, indeed, on this very day, thy brave heart was pierced, not once only, but more than a hundred times. For no trouble came upon thy Son in thy sight, which did not pierce thy heart.

And how couldst thou *stand*? For the Evangelist saith: "There *stood* by the Cross of Jesus His Mother." Whence came thy strength? Of a certainty, thy body was not of steel or stone, that this day thou couldst be pierced so many times by the sword of sorrow, and crucified so many times, and wounded together with thy Son, nevertheless thou didst *stand* there firm both in body and soul. Peradventure those strong and rough nails held thee also fast upon the Cross of thy Son, so that thou couldst not fall. But far more strongly did thy mighty love, love stronger than death itself, bear thee up, so that thou couldst not fall. Thou stoodest, 351
therefore, the immoveable column of the faith, the lioness that hath never been conquered, and that feareth no attack or threat when her little ones have been taken from her. Thou hadst no fear for the fury of the Jews, the neighing of the horses, the noise of arms, for thou wert ready to die with thy Son. Nor couldst thou deny Him, as Peter had done, or fly, like the other apostles, or doubt, like the disciples, or suffer any scandal, like not a few, for well thou knewest Whom thou hadst conceived, and brought forth, and how.

Therefore thou stoodest by His Cross, and didst adore His Godhead in spirit. Truly thou stoodest like some strong tower, in which the king, who had set forth on a long journey, had hidden the precious treasure of faith. Thou stoodest, I say, by the tree of the Cross, in order to cooperate by thy bitter pain in man's redemption, by looking on the fruit of life; even as of old Eve had brought death on man, by standing with pleasure by the tree, and looking at its fruit of death. And, because all grief and compassion that spring from love are great according to the measure of love, therefore, because thy love was beyond all measure, thy grief was utterly measureless. And because thou knewest Jesus, thy beloved Son, to be the true Son of God, thy love for His Godhead, and thy love for His Manhood, like two 352
mighty rocks, pressed together thy heart between them, and straitened it in mortal agony, when thou sawest Jesus, the Son of God, Whom thou hadst conceived in thy chaste womb, treated so horribly and shamefully in His Human nature, and so cruelly put to death. Of a truth, these were the two sharp swords that cruelly pierced thy soul with all affliction and grief. For, as a bride full of burning love, thou hadst bitter grief for the grievous contempt and wrong which thou sawest inflicted on thy Bridegroom, even thy God and Lord; and, as a faithful and true Mother, thou didst sorrow exceedingly, in like manner, for the horrible pains and most shameful death which thou beheldest thy sweet Son undergo. Moreover, because the Passion of this thy Son was so exceeding great, that according to the rigour of

justice it might outweigh by its own weight all the sins of the world, which are numberless and boundless, therefore was thy suffering also measureless and boundless; and because thy sorrow corresponded with His torments, on that account was thy cross and affliction beyond all comprehension and measure, and thy merits limitless. Again, as it had been decreed by God that the most blessed Virgin Mary was to stand between God and sinful man as a reconciler, for this very reason He Himself permitted her to suffer a great sickness and sorrow 353 of soul, that the merits of her affliction might be as great as those of one who stood between God and man ought to be, and that they might suffice for all men, who might thus draw help from the measureless treasury of her merits. It was fitting, too, that this same holy Virgin, our Lady, whom God Almighty wished to be the Mother of the children of grace, should perform as sad funeral rites of her Son, as all the children of grace taken together could possibly, or ought rightly and deservedly to perform.

So great, then, was her cross, so mighty her affliction, that although she might have found some little comfort in her Son's Passion, in order to relieve her sorrow, yet was this straightway swallowed up by the force of the flood of bitterness, even as a drop of sweet wine would be lost in the salt sea. Here, then, were to be seen two altars, made ready for the Father of heaven; one in the Body of Christ, the other the Heart of the Virgin Mother. Christ, indeed, offered His Flesh and Blood, Mary her soul. And, of a surety, that sweet Mother desired to mingle her blood with that of her Son, so that, together with Him, the work of man's redemption might be accomplished. But it was the privilege of the High Priest alone, to enter with blood into the Holy of holies. Wherefore, although the Blessed Virgin could 354 not accomplish her sacrifice by shedding her blood outwardly for God, nevertheless inwardly she burnt and consumed all in the glowing fire of love and sorrow. And, of a truth, she did offer to God a pleasing sacrifice, even as the Prophet saith, "a broken heart, and afflicted spirit," or, as the text hath it, "a troubled spirit;" and in place of blood she shed forth tears, and her sighs were borne, like clouds of sweet incense, up to heaven. In this way she performed and offered her sacrifice for all the children of grace, whose Mother she was, and she, too, was heard for her reverence.

Now then, O my soul, and as many as desire to be the children of grace, look up to Christ your Father in His bitter agony, and see how by His Death He hath recalled you to life, and, like the faithful pelican, hath quickened and nourished you, His little ones, with His own Blood. Look, too, on your sorrow-stricken Mother Mary, who suffereth new pains of labour by reason of you, in order that you may be made the children of grace. Through your Father you have life, through your Mother grace is given you. Have compassion, therefore, on your parents, whom you see labouring in such anxious pain for your salvation, if, indeed, you are the children of grace. Oh! how often did that most sad Mother lift up her 355 eyes to gaze upon the disfigured Body of her Son, and yet was forced to cast them down, pouring forth bitter tears. She saw His wounded Body, and yet she could not anoint it; she

saw the fearful Blood-shedding, yet it was not given to her to wipe it away; she saw His members cruelly extended, yet she could not loosen or relieve them. She beheld Him clad in His purple robe, with which she had not clothed Him; and the garment which He had received from her, all torn, and tattered, and worn. She saw Him bow down His Sacred Head to die, and all His members sighing for death, and this was the only relief and lightening of those her pains, whereby her tender heart was pressed out like a grape, so that she could truly say with her Son: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."

Now when her sweet Son saw these things, Who hitherto had contained Himself, in order that her mighty faith, and her great faithfulness, and her unconquered patience, and her glorious passion, and, above all, her boundless love that could not be restrained, and lest the glory of her cross might be lessened, could now no longer contain Himself, but with tender and comforting voice addressed her, saying: "Woman, behold thy Son!" as if He would say: "Sweetest, dearest, most faithful Mother, I know thy sorrow and woe; I know 356
how much thou sufferest for the love of Me: I perceive the anguish of thy devoted heart, when thou beholdest Me, thy beloved Son, in such exceeding pain, and when thou art so pitiably deprived of thy dear Child, in Whom is all thy hope and consolation. But what comfort can I give thee, sweetest and most faithful Mother? My Passion must needs be finished, and I must die; now hath the hour come that I should go to Him Who sent Me. Wherefore I leave to thee My best loved disciple to be thy son in the place of Me, to console thee, and guard thee, and to care for thee, and that, as a dutiful son, he may be subject and *obedient* to thee, his Mother." But how, think you, did these words of our Lord Jesus pierce His sad Mother's tender heart, when she heard that she was thus left utterly destitute; that for the Son of God there was given her a child of man; for her Creator, a creature; for her Master, the disciple; for tier Lord, a servant? How did her great love for our Lord then melt her utterly away, when she thought with herself of all His anxious care for her, and that He was more afflicted by compassion at His Mother's sorrow than at His own Passion! For now death stood at His door, yet still He thought about His Mother. Devouring death had already well nigh stiffened all His members, yet once more they grew warm again from love, and 357
were moved to compassion. He put forth all the strength still left Him to console her, as if He had forgotten all His own woe, and was tormented by His Mother's grief alone. Then, as well as He could, He turned all His members to comfort her. First, indeed, He bowed His Head, as if to bid the last farewell, and to ask her leave to depart from life. Then He lovingly turned to her His eyes red with Blood, and still wet with warm tears. Lastly, He opened His lips, that were already growing pale with death, and said: "Woman, not My Mother only, but woman, in the widest sense, by reason of thy great fruitfulness"—even as of old God had said to Abraham's wife that she should be called no more Sarai, but Sara, "for I have made thee the mother of many nations." "Woman, behold thy Son. Here is John, who will be thy son, whose name, being interpreted, is grace. And I have granted thee this privilege,

that thou mayest be the mother of grace for evermore, by reason of the exceeding great merits of thy sorrow, nor shall thy breasts be ever without the milk of grace, whereby thou mayest foster and nourish all and each who press them by devout prayer. Wherefore, O most fruitful Woman, behold thy Son, and weep no more, for thou art no withered tree, no forsaken and barren mother without children. Rejoice, rather, for thou art the most fruitful 358
of all mothers that have ever been, and blessed above all women. By these pains of labour which now thou sufferest, thou wilt bring forth children without number, and thou shalt be the mother of all, who by My grace shall believe in Me. All these, as thy own children, shalt thou foster and guard in the bosom of thy maternal grace, giving them to drink of the milk of thy chaste breasts, because thou thyself hast found grace before God. All who thirst shall run to thee, and say: 'Show thyself to be our mother.' Wherefore, Woman, behold! not one Son alone, but many sons; and now forget thy grief. Let this comfort thee, and lighten and lessen thy labour."

O Mary, Mother of grace, Mother of mercy, strengthen us in all virtue, preserve us from all evil, and protect us from all the enemies of our souls.

Then our Lord said to His disciple: 'Behold thy Mother!" Now this was said not to John alone, but to all converted sinners, for whom grace is all necessary, and who, without grace, die like infants without milk. For no man can persevere or make progress without the nourishment of grace. O Mary! true mother of grace and of mercy, to whom hast thou ever closed the bosom of thy grace? From whom hast thou ever withdrawn the breasts of thy 359
tenderness? Let him keep silent in thy praise, who complaineth that he hath suffered repulse from thee, or hath been defrauded of grace. We praise virginity, we marvel at humility, we extol justice; but mercy is dearer to them who are in misery, and mercy we embrace with greater love, and remember more often, and more frequently invoke.

Wherefore, as many of us as are in need of grace, let us stand by the Cross, and with Mary let us be crucified inwardly by compassion. Of a truth, our tender Lord, Who hath spent His whole self and all that He hath, will not suffer us to go away from the Cross without comfort and reward. And although He is overwhelmed in pain, yet He will have care of us. Although He goeth now to the Father, He will not leave us orphans; but He will commend us to His own Father, and will send us another Comforter, His own Holy Spirit. Moreover, He will give us His own spotless, Virgin Mother, saying: "Behold your Mother!" How sweet, how full of comfort is this word to all who are weak, that they should have so faithful, so kind, so merciful a mother, who learnt compassion from what she herself suffered? Of a truth, she filled up in herself what was wanting, and belonging to Christ's Passion, that by her merits she might bring help to all men. But oh! how small is our hope and trust in God! 360
We have the Father of mercy for our Father, waiting for us with open bosom, that He may make us joint-heirs with His Son on high in the kingdom of heaven. The Son also is our Advocate, Who by His own labour and pain leadeth us back into the Father's grace. We

have the Holy Ghost for our Comforter in this valley of tears, that we may not be cast down in heart, or broken down from weariness. Moreover, we have received for our -food Christ's adorable Body and precious Blood, lest we faint by the way, and as a pledge of bliss to come, lest we should doubt or be overcome by despair. Lastly, Mary standeth between us and God to reconcile us to Him, and to renew our peace. And what cannot such a Mother obtain from her Son? What more comforting word could Christ have spoken to us than this word: "Behold thy Mother!" Behold your Mother full of mercy, who will ever receive you as her children, full, also, of grace, who will feed and nourish you to the full.

361

THE FORTY-FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Sun is darkened.

Nowom the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour, which with us is the twelfth hour, when the sun is highest. But now the sun hath withdrawn his light, and hath put upon him his mourning garment, in order to show, as best he could, his sorrow and compassion for his Maker, Who was at that moment girt about with such anguish and torments; as if the Father, Whose nature cannot suffer, nor have sorrow, nor weep, had given command to His creature to mourn in His stead, and to perform the funeral offices of His Son, and to be the companion of the spotless Virgin in her sorrow, who then alone wept for Christ's Passion. Peradventure, she was even then complaining gently to the Father in this wise: "O most loving Father, am I alone His Mother? Art not Thou the Eternal Father of Thy Son, Who hangeth here in such pitiable affliction? Why dost Thou suffer me to weep alone, and to suffer this intolerable sorrow, which, of a certainty, is not due to me alone? Hast not Thou long before borne witness, that this is Thy beloved Son, in Whom Thou art well pleased? Where are now the signs of Thy love to Him? He hangeth here, not as the Son of God, not as the Son of the King, not as the friend of God, not even as some poor servant of God, but as a transgressor, guilty of death, forsaken, and 362 humbled by God. Hast Thou, then, forsaken Him Whom the disciples have forsaken? What hath He done against Thee, that Thou shouldst deliver Him to His enemies? Is it because Thou art the Lord Almighty, and heedest nothing, that Thou art touched by no pity for Him in His affliction? Because Thou art a spirit, canst Thou not feel? Because Thou dwellest in heaven, hast Thou no concern for what is done on earth? Because Thou art in glory, dost Thou not behold and regard the contempt, and the wrong, and the reproach, and the affliction, and the dreadful death of Thy only-begotten Son? Dost Thou not see, O most just Judge, how the malice of the Jews rageth madly against Thy beloved Son, Who suffereth Himself, like an innocent lamb, to be torn, and wounded, and crucified, and slain, and His precious Blood to be poured out like water? Vouchsafe, O loving Father, to be touched with pity and compassion for this Thy wretched Son, for Thy nature is goodness, and Thy property is ever to have mercy, above all, on those who are wretched, and oppressed, and who suffer wrong. Come, too, and help His sorrowing Mother, whom Thou seest in such agony, and alone with Thy Son treading His wine-press!"

Now to these complaints of Christ's tender Mother, we may imagine the Father of 363 heaven to have made answer in this or in like manner: "Make no complaint to Me, O My chosen daughter, that for a little while I have forsaken thee; for this I have done out of My goodness, for the increase of thy glory and merits, that thy affliction may be in harmony with My Son's Passion, which He, with perfect resignation, must undergo even to the end. Think not that thy prayers, and groans, and tears, have not come up before Me. Know by

what is happening whether I have compassion for My own Son or no. For although no sorrow, no affliction, can fall upon My nature, yet I will do through My creatures what My Godhead cannot do. Lo! I will stir up and move the whole world to sorrow, and to weep bitter tears for My Son, so that all creatures shall celebrate with thee the funeral of My Beloved Son. For all this world was made by Me, and as many creatures as live thereon obey and serve Me. Only these hardened sinners oppose Me, for I, Myself, have given them the faculty of free will. Thou, therefore, O sun, withdraw thy pleasant splendour, make the whole world sad, and become the companion of the blessed Virgin Mother in weeping for My Son. Thou, also, O Earth, tremble with horror at such great wickedness and cruelty, and at the crimes of the evil-minded men whom thou bearest on thy shoulders; be horrified at the wrong and 364
contempt inflicted upon Me. Marvel at My patience, loving-kindness, and longsuffering, that I suffer these things so long; shake with fear, and acknowledge thyself unworthy to drink in the precious Blood of My Son. And you, ye hard rocks, chastise and reprove the hardheartedness of the Jews, and of all sinners, whom these fearful torments of My Son cannot soften, nor move their hearts to know Him, and receive My grace. O most cruel death, thou devourer of life, that hast not spared even My only Son. This malice shall fall back on thine own head; thou shalt be caught in the net which thou hast stretched out for My only One: of a truth, thou shalt be slain by Him Whom thou hopedst to swallow up. Unjust and wicked are thy judgments. Thou hast devoured My Son along with the sinners of earth, because He wore a garment of earth, and the likeness of a sinner, although He was without sin. Therefore shall His innocent death fall back upon thee; thy strength shall be broken, and thou shalt be cast down from thy lordship, because thou hast abused it against right and reason. It is sin thou oughtest to correct, not to oppress the Just One. But thou hast smitten the just and good one along with the wicked. Thou hast a zeal, indeed, for 365
justice, but not according to knowledge and right reason. The vengeance, therefore, which thou hast wrongfully taken on My Son, shall deliver the whole human race from the punishment it deserves. And that thou mayest know that thou art conquered, and that through life all thy former power hath been taken away from thee, and that all thy dominion hath fallen back into nothing, give up now the dead, whom hitherto, for so many ages, thou hast held captive. For My Son, by the arms and power of His Cross, hath gotten Himself the victory, and obtained possession of them, and hath acquired the right to set them free." Meanwhile, we may imagine what must have been this new sorrow of God's Mother, when she saw the elements and senseless creatures give forth such signs of sorrow and compassion for her Son. How did her still recent tears, that had sprung from her former consolation, now begin to flow afresh in sweet and abundant streams, when she found that she had now so many companions in her sorrow!

Now the sun hid the brightness of his light, because Christ, the true Sun of Justice, had
set over the whole world, and was hidden in darkness, and because the light of faith had 366

failed above measure, save in the Virgin Mother, and in the thief, who confessed our Lord. The sun was also darkened, because he could not bear to look on the bitter passion, and contempt, and shame, and wrong, which those savage men were inflicting on their Maker.

THE FORTY-SIXTH CHAPTER.

"*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*"

About the ninth hour our Lord Jesus cried with a loud voice: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He cried with a loud voice, that He might easily be heard by all, and, at the same time, by this wonderful word, might shake off the slumber of sloth from our souls, and cause them to marvel and be astonished at God's immense goodness towards us. He saith, therefore: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Why? For the sake of vile sinners, for the sake of wicked and ungrateful servants, for the sake of sinful and disobedient prevaricators, Thou hast forsaken Thy Beloved Son, and most obedient Child. That the vessels of wrath, Thy enemies, might be changed into the children of adoption, 367
Thou hast slain Thy own Son, and, as a sinner, hast delivered Him over to death. O My God, why, I pray Thee, hast Thou forsaken Me? For the very reason why men ought to praise and thank Thee, for the very reason why they ought to love Thee with everlasting love; because, namely, Thou hast delivered Thy dear Son to death for their redemption, and gladly sacrificed Him, for this reason will they draw matter for blasphemy and shameful reproach against Thee, saying: "He saith, He is the Son of God, and that He hoped in God. Let God deliver Him now if He will." Why, My God, hast Thou desired to spend so precious a treasure for such vile and adulterated merchandise?

Moreover, this word may be taken to mean that it was spoken by Christ against those who endeavour to lessen the glory of His Passion, by saying that it was not so bitter or terrible after all, because of the great help and support He derived from His Godhead. Now those who say and think this, let them know that they renew His Passion, and crucify Him afresh; and, therefore, to prove the error of these men, our Lord cried with a loud voice, and said: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" as if He said these words to His own divine nature, with which He formed one Person—and the Godhead of the Father and of the Son 368
is one and the same—marvelling, Himself, at His own love, which had so cast Him down, and worn Him away, and humbled Him, and that He Who bringeth help to all men, should have forsaken Himself, and exposed Himself to every kind of pain, led to do this, and conquered by love alone.

Nor, again, should we be wrong, were we to interpret this word which Christ spoke out of the immensity and vehemence of His sorrow in this sense: namely, that this Spirit and inward man, taking upon itself God's severe judgment upon all sinners, and, at the same time, clearly seeing, and perfectly feeling and measuring in Himself the intolerable weight of His Passion, on this account cried out with sorrowful voice to His Father, and poured forth tender complaints, because He had been plunged into these horrible torments; as if His Father's goodness had become so embittered against the sins of men, that in the heat

of justice He had utterly forgotten the inseparable union between His passible Humanity and His impassible Godhead, and therefore, in the fiery zeal of justice, had delivered His passible nature wholly up to the cruelty and malignity of savage men, and had given it over to them, that they might waste it away, and bring it down to nothing. For this reason, then, 369
He said: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

This word hath, besides, an inward meaning; according to which Christ, in His sensitive parts, made complaint to His Father, that He had been forsaken by Him. For as many as contend for His honour, and bear in patience the adversities of this world, our tender God so moderateth and tempereth their crosses and afflictions by the inpouring of His Divine consolation, that by this sensible grace He rendereth their whole cross well nigh insensible: but He left His own Be loved Son utterly without any comfort, and so stripped Him of every consolation and light, that He suffered as much in His human nature, as the Eternal Wisdom had determined and decreed, according to the rigour of justice, and as much as was required, according to the same rigour, to atone for so many sins. And, indeed, our salvation was so much the more nobly and perfectly repaired, as it was accomplished and finished without any light whatsoever, in utter resignation and abandonment. For the chief cause of Christ’s Passion was to show clearly how great was the wrong and contempt brought upon His most high Godhead by the sills of the human race. Now, as Christ’s knowledge was higher and more subtle than that of all beings, whether in heaven or in earth together, so much the 370
greater, therefore, and heavier, was His sorrow and anguish. Nay,—and this is the most marvellous of all—whatever afflictions have been experienced by all the saints, as Christ’s members, existed in far greater abundance in Christ their Head, as in the source of all sorrow: but this, of course, I wish to be understood according to the spirit and according to reason. For all the saints that have ever been, have suffered no more than flowed in upon them through Christ united to them His members; Who communicated to them His own afflictions. Truly it was He Who suffered in them, rather than they themselves. For He drew upon Himself the affliction of all the saints, out of His great love for His members, and marvellous compassion, and He felt them with far more interior agony than any of the saints; nay, more than even the most blessed Virgin Mary, God’s Mother, felt her own sharp sorrow and sickness of soul. For if an earthly father loveth his child so much, that in his fatherly compassion he taketh upon him his child’s sorrows, so as to grieve for them as if he suffered them himself, what must have been Christ’s Cross and Christ’s compassion, at the affliction of His members, above all, of those who suffered for His Name’s sake? Of a truth, He bore clear witness to His members, how much He suffered from their afflictions, how great was 371
His inward compassion for their pains, when He took all their debt upon Him, and did away with all the punishments they had deserved, so that they might go free. The same is more than sufficiently borne out by the words He addressed to S. Paul, when He said: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” For the persecution which Paul had stirred up against the dis-

ciples, that is, the members of our Lord, was no less grievous unto Him than if He had borne it Himself. Hence He saith to His friends and members: “He who toucheth you, is as one who toucheth the apple of My eye.” For is there anything suffered by the members which the Head doth not suffer with them, Whose nature is goodness, and Whose property is to have mercy and to spare?

After our Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary was of all the most desolate, because, above all others, He had given her a share of His own sorrow and abandonment, so that, so far as was possible, her cross might be conformed to His own Cross and affliction, and that, at the same time, she might feel as great woe for the Death of so great a Son, as was pleasing unto God, and as became so great a Mother. Most true, therefore, were the words which Isaias spake concerning her: “The Lord hath called thee a woman that is forsaken, and is in sorrow.” 372
Thus, too, our Lord’s abandonment is spoken of in the person of Elias: “With zeal was I inflamed for the Lord God of Hosts, because the children of Israel have forsaken the covenant of the Lord. They have destroyed Thy altars, they have slain Thy prophets with the sword, and I, even I, am left alone, and behold they seek my life to take it away.” Moreover, this word of Christ may be taken to express Christ’s acknowledgment and confession of His own spotless innocence, and perfect justice, and also His wonder at the severe sentence of God His Father; so that, in the excess of His wonder, He broke out into that sad cry: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” My God, Whose nature is goodness, and Whose property is to have mercy, and to help the oppressed and the innocent, why hast Thou suffered Me to waste away by a bitter death, giving Me over into the hands of My enemies, and delivering Me over to their cruel will, although never, even for one moment, I have departed from the path of Thy justice, but have most perfectly performed all virtues, in accordance with Thy Divine will; as if He had said: “I, indeed, find no cause in Me, nor do I acknowledge any fault, by reason of which Thou oughtest, even for a moment, to forsake 373
Me, for I have ever worshipped Thee and adored Thee with due homage. Yet, if Thou wishest to glorify Thyself through Me, and to declare unto men Thy Fatherly goodness, Thy Divine mercy, and Thy immense love, by this Thy abandonment of Me, Thy will be done; into Thy hands I wholly commend Myself.”

Lastly, we may suppose that this word expresseth the twofold nature of Christ’s Humanity, and therefore our Lord said twice: “My God, My God,” as if both His Manhood and His Godhead made complaint to God. First of all, indeed, His rational or inner nature cried out, both from the immensity of His anguish and from natural affection and love and compassion towards His sensitive part; “My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me, and left Me in such horrible pain and intolerable anguish, deprived of comfort and relief?” Then, too, in its turn, His sensitive nature cried out from the agony of these unutterable pains: “My God, why hast

Thou left Me in such cruel torments? Why hast Thou cast off from Thee, as if in anger, Thy purest instrument, whereby Thou hast worked so pleasantly, and delightfully, and marvellously, and which was ever obedient to Thee in all things?” Of a truth, the greatness of Christ’s inward and outward affliction no man hath ever known, save Christ Himself. Hence 374
it is that no man knoweth how to compassionate Him. Yet He, besides all His own grievous torment, was compelled to feel and bear the sorrows and pains of all who suffer with Him. Now if many, not from grace but from nature, suffer not a few grievous things with a light heart, this is because they are hard as iron, and insensible, and therefore their hard and stony hearts are touched with no sorrow or compassion either for their own or others’ afflictions. But Christ, because He was of all men the tenderest and most merciful, in nature, too, and character, and complexion, the gentlest and the noblest, had exceeding great compassion for Himself, for no one could measure or know the bitterness and weight of what He suffered, save Himself alone. Hence this twofold sorrow and pressure of Christ’s Passion and compassion, like two sea-waves tempest-tossed, surging and striking one against the other, so beat against every part of Christ, inwardly and outwardly, and wore Him away, and racked and tortured Him, as to pass all understanding, and indeed, that this was so, He Himself declared at the very outset of His Passion, when the sensitive and rational parts of His nature, like two torrents, rushed one upon the other with mighty force, and so afflicted our Lord, that in His exceeding anguish His sweat was both of blood and water. For even as then His 375
sensitive nature cried out from great compassion: “Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me;” so, too, now it saith: “My God, why last Thou forsaken Me?” And even as His rational nature added: “If this chalice cannot pass from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done;” so, too, now it crieth out: “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.” Now not a little weight was added to Christ’s sorrows, because, even to His last breath, He had the sense of feeling in all His members, and this sense was alive and perfect; nor was it dulled or extinguished by any stupor; as may easily be seen from the fact that it was with a loud voice that He cried out, and gave up the ghost. And so, to the very last moment of His life, He suffered in like manner in all His members.

376

THE FORTY-SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Jesus complaineth of His thirst.

Our most tender Lord was so exhausted and dried up by the exceeding great bitterness of His pain and anguish, and by His immoderate blood-shedding, that He cried out: “I thirst.” This is indeed a little word, but full of mysteries. First of all, it may be literally taken. For it is only natural, that all who are about to breathe their last should have thirst, and a desire to drink. But how great was the dryness felt by Him Who is the well-spring of living water, but Who was now exhausted and dried up by the heat of His burning love, when He could truly say: “Like water I am poured out;” and again, “My strength is dried up like a potsherd.” For not only did He shed all His own Blood, and pour forth whatever He had of moisture by His tears, but the very marrow of His bones, and all His Heart’s Blood, were consumed for our sakes by the heat and flame of His love. Rightly then, He said: “I thirst.”

Secondly, this word can be spiritually understood, as if Christ said to all in general: “I thirst for your salvation.” Hence Bernard saith: “‘I thirst,’ cried Christ, not ‘I grieve.’ O Lord, what dost Thou thirst for? For your faith, your joy. I thirst because of the torments of your souls, far more than for those of My Body. Have pity, if not upon Me, at least upon 377
yourselves.” And again: “good Jesus, Thou wearest the crown of thorns: Thou art silent about Thy Cross and Thy Wounds, yet for thirst alone Thou criest out, ‘I thirst.’ What, then, dost Thou thirst for? Truly for the redemption of man alone, and for the joy of the human race.” This thirst of Christ was a hundredfold more sharp and vehement than His natural thirst. He had, moreover, another kind of thirst, that is to say, of suffering more, and proving to us still more expressly and clearly His measureless love, as if He said to man: “See how I am exhausted and worn away for the sake of thy salvation. See how horrible are the pains and torments that I suffer. The savage cruelty of men hath brought Me down well-nigh to nothing—the sinners of earth have drunk out all My Blood, yet still I thirst. Not yet is My Heart satisfied, not yet is My desire fulfilled, not vet is the flame of My love quenched. For if it were possible for Me, and pleasing to My Father, that I should be crucified again even a thousand times for your salvation and conversion, or that I should hang here in all this misery and pain even until the last judgment day, most gladly would I do it, both to prove unto you the measureless love of My Heart for you, and to soften your stony hearts, and to 378
excite you to love Me in return. This is why I hang here so thirsty by the fountain of your hearts, so that I may observe the devout souls that come hither to draw out of the bottomless well of My Passion. Therefore, the maiden to whom I shall say, “Give Me a little water to drink out of the pitcher of thy conscience”—the water, that is, of devotion, compassion, of tears and mutual love—and who shall let down her pitcher to Me, and shall answer: “Drink, my Lord; and for Thy camels, that is, Thy servants, who carry Thee about daily on their

bodies, and who, both by night and day, are held fast bound in Thy yoke, I will draw in like manner the water of brotherly love—that is, the maiden whom the Lord hath prepared for the son of My Lord, even the bride of the Word of God, united to My Humanity. And she shall be worthy to enter, like a bride with her Bridegroom, into the bed-chamber of everlasting rest, at the invitation of the Bridegroom, Who saith: "Come, My blessed bride, possess the kingdom of My Father. For I was thirsty, and thou gavest Me to drink."

Thirdly, we may apply this word to the Father, as if Christ had said to His Father: "Father, I have made known Thy Name unto men; I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do, and in Thy work I have spent My whole Body as Thine instrument. Behold! I am all exhausted and worn away; nevertheless, I still thirst to do and to suffer more for Thy 379
honour. This is why I hang here stretched out unto the farthest breadth of love, for I desire to be an everlasting sacrifice, a sweet odour unto Thee, an eternal praise, and, at the same time, an everlasting atonement and salvation unto men." Thus, too, might this strong Samson have said: "Thou, O Lord, hast given into the hand of Thy servant this exceeding great salvation and victory, and yet, behold! I die of thirst;" as if He would say: "My Father, I have fulfilled Thy gracious will; I have finished the work of man's salvation as Thou requiredst it, yet still I thirst; for the sins whereby Thou art offended are infinite. Therefore I desire that the charity and merits of My Passion, whereby Thou art to be appeased, may be also infinite. And as I now offer Myself for the salvation of all men a peace-offering, and a living sacrifice, so through Me may all men appease Thee, by offering Me to Thee as a peace-offering to Thy eternal glory, in memory of My Passion, and to supply for all their defects." How pleasing to the Father must have been this desire of love! For what else was this thirst, but a certain sweet and delightful refreshment to the Father, both warm and healing, and, at the same time, the blessed renewal of mankind! Or what other language doth this burning throat speak to us, than that of Christ's burning love, out of which, indeed, measureless, 380
and without bounds, He wrought all His works. Of a truth, this is the most noble sacrifice of our redemption, this is that peace-offering which will be offered even till the last day, by all the good, through the Holy Ghost, to the most high Father, in memory of the Son, to the everlasting glory of the Adorable Trinity, and the admirable profit and fruit of salvation for mankind. Here, clearly, is the measureless treasure of our reconciliation, which upon earth never faileth, for it is greater than all the debts of the world. This is that measureless love, higher than the heavens, for it hath restored again the ruin of the angels; deeper than hell, for it hath freed souls therefrom; wider and broader than earth, for it is without end, and cannot be understood by any created understanding. Oh! how sharp and vehement was this thirst of our Lord! For not only did He then say once: "I thirst," but even still without ceasing He saith within our hearts, "I thirst; woman, give He to drink." So great, I say, and so mighty is that thirst, that He asketh drink, not only of the children of Israel, but even of the Samaritans. And to each one doth He complain of His thirst. 381

But what dost Thou thirst for, O good Jesus? “My drink and My food,” He answereth, “is that men should do My Father’s will. Now this is the Father’s will, even your sanctification and salvation, that you may sanctify your souls, by walking in My precepts, by performing true works of penance, by adorning yourselves with all virtues, that as a bride made ready and adorned, you may be worthy to come to My supper in My Father’s kingdom, and to sleep with Me as My elect bride, ill the bed-chamber of My Father’s Heart.” Oh! with what longing doth Christ desire to lead all men thither. This is what He meaneth when He saith: “Wheresoever I shall be, there also shall My servant be.” And again: Father, I will that even as We are one, they may be one.” Oh! how beyond all understanding is this thirst of Christ! Oh! what sweat and labour He underwent three and thirty years for the sake of this! For this the marrow and blood of His very Heart were spent. See what our tender Lord saith to His Father: “The zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up.” Of a truth, He would have suffered Himself to be crucified even a thousand times, rather than suffer one soul to perish for any fault of His. Oh! how did this inward thirst afflict Him, when He thought that He had both done all that He could, and even a hundredfold more than He need have done, and yet that
so few had been turned to Him, and gained by Him. His whole Body was now worn away; 382
all His Blood was shed; there was nothing left which He could do, and therefore He was forced to confess, and say: “It is finished;” yet, by all His labours, and sorrows, and pains, He had brought no greater fruit, no greater gain to His Father than this. Of a truth, it was the bitterest of all sorrows, that in so hard a fight His victory had not been more august, and that He returned victorious to His Father with so few spoils. Wherefore, as many as refresh Him not by fulfilling His will, and earnestly performing whatever is pleasing and honourable to Him, and by manfully and bravely resisting all that reason telleth them is displeasing unto Him, all these will with the damned hear Him one day say: “I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink.” Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.

Fourthly, there is another inward meaning of this word; namely, that Christ uttered it out of the love which inwardly drew Him towards all men; thus declaring unto us His burning love, and opening His own Heart, as a delightful couch, whereon we may feed pleasantly, and, at the same time, inviting us unto it, saying: “I thirst for you.” For as the draught which we drink is sent down through the throat with sensible delight, and goeth
down pleasantly into our inward parts, and passeth into the substance and nature of our 383
body, even so Christ, out of the burning thirst of His love, taketh spiritual delight in drinking in all men into Himself, and thus receiving them, as it were, and sweetly swallowing them, and incorporating them into Himself, and bringing them into the secret chamber of His loving Heart. Wherefore He saith: “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things unto Me;” that is, as many as suffer themselves to be drawn by Me, and subject themselves unto Me as obedient instruments, suffering Me to do with them according to My gracious will. But they who resist Christ, who suffer not themselves to be licked up by the flame and

heat of Christ's love, so that He may drink them in, and swallow them down into His bowels; these, indeed, quench not His thirst, but give Him a bitter draught instead, even the works of their own self-will. And these, as soon as our Lord tasteth, He vomiteth out.

Fifthly, this word may be taken to express, what our Lord said to His sorely afflicted Mother, as she stood by the Cross: "O My sweet Mother, see into what need the Son of God and thy Son hath been brought down. I, indeed, created the seas, and the springs, and all moisture. I command the clouds, and they pour forth rain. To My angels I give to drink of 384
the delights of heaven, and to My saints the cup of everlasting blessedness. To My friends still upon earth I give to drink of inward consolation, and to My disciples of Divine wisdom, and to all sinners I give the chalice of redemption. Yet there is not one, no, not one, who will refresh My tongue in this My bitter thirst." Oh! how that word must have cut and pierced into the devout and heavy heart of the spotless Virgin, when she heard her only-begotten Son, Whom she had nursed on her virgin breast, complain of His thirst in His great need, and yet could not help Him. Peradventure, she answered Him thus: "O my sweet Son, I am seized with such exceeding and intolerable anguish, that I cannot help Thee. I am so crucified with Thee by unutterable compassion, that I cannot move. I am now without any strength at all, because I see Thee, the only comfort of my heart, crucified so unjustly before my eyes, so shamefully despised, so cruelly slain: and yet I cannot die with Thee, nor bring Thee any help. I am wholly melted away—the marrow of my soul is melted. Thou seest, O my loving Son, that I am all melted by the heat of Thy love, and, like the grape, am pressed out by the grievous weight of Thy Passion. Therefore, draw me all into Thyself; drink me in, swallow me, change me into Thy body, that I may be wholly Thy refreshment and relief in this Thy 385
grievous thirst."

Sixthly and lastly, we may gather from this word that Christ afforded thereby great consolation to His loving Mother and all the saints, and lightened thereby the labour which they have borne for His sake, whether by action or by suffering. For even if their labour and affliction be small, yet is it altogether pleasing and delicious, like Christ, to take some sweet drink. For, on the Cross itself, He drank in with great delight all the compassion, sorrow, devotion, sighs and tears, which were the fruit of meditation upon the Passion. And all the persecutions, distresses, afflictions borne for His honour, all the rigorous penances, fasts, prayers, watchings; all the mortifications of nature; all the works of obedience and charity, and all the deeds to be performed in His honour even to the last judgment day; all these our Lord Jesus drank in in a certain marvellous way, and swallowed them in His great thirst, and joined to His own Body, and united with His own works, and cleansed in His warm Blood, and heated in the fire of His divine love, and perfected and finished, by His own merits and actions, whatever was imperfect and defective therein, and so at last offered them 386
in the sight of His Eternal Father, and made them pleasing and acceptable unto Him.

THE FORTY-EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Jesus drinketh vinegar and gall upon the Cross.

Nowter our Lord Jesus had uttered this word concerning His thirst, a certain man filled a sponge with vinegar and gall, and offered it to Christ's sacred mouth. And this, indeed, our Lord, according to David's prophecy, desired to taste, that He might suffer torment in all His members and senses; and that the sin of Adam, which had been committed through the delight of taste, might be corrected by this bitter and unpleasant taste. But here, first of all, we may notice the spitefulness, and hardness of heart, and bitterness of the Jews, in that all these torments, and blood-sheddings, and cruel sufferings, which they had inflicted on our Lord, had not even yet quenched their blood-thirstiness. They saw Him now at the very point of death, yet in no way did they restrain their cruelty. It had been decreed, indeed, by 387 Solomon, that those who were condemned should be refreshed by an aromatic and sweet draught, so that they might become unconscious of their pains; but these wretches drank this wine themselves, and made up for Christ instead, as bitter a draught as they could think of in their poison-laden hearts. For they were, indeed, themselves vessels of gall and vinegar, full of hatred and spite; nor could they draw therefrom aught but gall and vinegar. Oh! how afflicted must our tender Lord have been, Whose nature is goodness, when He looked at the poisonous and bitter dregs, which were, in truth, the unquenchable fire of the cruelty and the stony and obstinate malice of the Jews, whereby they whom He had fed for so many successive years in the wilderness with the manna of heaven, which had in it the sweetness of every taste, and whom He had embraced with such Fatherly love, and enriched with so many and such marvellous benefits, feared not in His extreme and greatest need to offer Him such a draught. Of a truth, this their envy and want of mercy was a greater torment to our Lord than the bitter draught itself. For the more virtuous a man is, so much the more is he grieved when he beholdeth malice and cruelty; and the more clearly he perceiveth it, so much the more grievously is he thereby tormented in heart. 388

But so far as relateth to the spiritual meaning, it was not only on the Cross that our Lord Jesus was tormented by the Jews with this bitter draught, but even now is He given, day by day, vinegar and gall to drink, by those who fear not to anger Him by their sins and iniquities; but, above all, by all Christians, who know, indeed, the way of truth and will of God, and yet do not what they ought. Of these He Himself complaineth, saying: "I planted thee a chosen vineyard, and I fenced thee round with the wall of faith, and I built in the midst of thee the high tower of My contemplation, and I gathered the stones from out of thee; that is, the holy martyrs and doctors, who are the foundation stones of the Church, and who have taught thee the way of life and truth both by word and deed. What more ought I to have done to My vineyard, and I have not done it? How art thou turned into bitterness, even thou, to cultivate which I spent so much labour and zeal, and which I bought

for Myself with so high a price? I looked that thou shouldst bring forth the sweet grapes of burning love, the fruit of good works; and thou offerest Me vinegar and gall, thorns and briars."

But let us now see what kind of wine every man should offer to Christ, and what are the fruits which he should give Him out of his vineyard. The Scripture saith: "A good man, out 389 of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good, and a bad man, out of the evil treasury of his heart, bringeth forth evil." Some, therefore, like the Jews, offer Christ wine mixed with gall. These are those great sinners who still have the will to work evil; who, although they perform good works, are all tainted with bitter gall, and contract the taste of the corrupt and filthy vessel in which it is contained; and these, as soon as they touch Christ's palate, are spat out by Him. Of these Moses speaketh in the canticle of Deuteronomy: "Their grape is the grape of gall, and the gall of dragons is their wine." And S. Peter saith to Simon Magus: "I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and thy heart is not right before God."

Others, indeed, offer wine to Christ, but it is corrupt, and acid, and bitter; for it is turned into vinegar. These are those dissolute and thoughtless men, who abstain, indeed, from deadly sins; but even as they take no thought of daily venial sins, so they abound in them, and exceeding often fall into them. And this happeneth to them, because they look not into the depths of their own souls, nor hearken to the warnings and reproaches of the Holy Ghost—nay, inwardly, they are blind and deaf. These seek God with a torn and divided heart. For they have not wholly torn themselves from all that can come between them and 390 God; and although they receive from above a certain inward light, and their reason beareth witness to them that in certain things they offend God, and displease Him, yet still they will not forsake these things; for they think that they can serve both God and the world. These, for the most part, are lukewarm, and slothful, and wandering in heart, and distracted; and they continue lukewarm when reading, or meditating, or doing anything of this sort. This, moreover, have they done for a long time, so that they have become utterly vapid and sour. And this wine, in like manner, Christ vomiteth out, as He saith in the Apocalypse: "I would that thou wert either warm or cold, but because thou art lukewarm I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth." And of these is it elsewhere said: "As vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them who have set him in the way."

Thirdly, there are others who offer Christ wine out of their vineyard; but as Isaias saith, their wine is mingled with water. Yet these are somewhat better, and are more watchful over their salvation, but their works are full of an exceeding perverse and strange intention; as, for example, because they work out of fear, or for reward, or from custom, or to please men, or for their own private convenience, or for consolation, or to obtain some other gifts from 391 God, or for other things of the same sort, wherein they seek themselves rather than God's pure honour, and to satisfy His will. These mingle water, as I have said, with their wine; some more, some less, so that Christ taketh no great pleasure in drinking thereof.

Fourthly and lastly, there are others who offer Christ Jesus most pure and sweet wine. These are the men who are truly dead and resigned, who in all their works look only to God's honour, and seek not their own selves in anything. These are the true sons of God, who have forgotten their natural generation, so as to deserve to have God for their Father: and they have received the Spirit of God as a sign and proof that they are the sons of God, in Whom also they cry: "Abba, Father;" and this, of a truth, no man can say from the Spirit's witness and declaration, unless he is the son of God. These have no fear of death, nor of hell, nor of the enemy, nor of man, nor of gain, nor of loss. For they have given themselves wholly unto God, and utterly resigned themselves into His hands, and it is pleasing to them to do whatever God willeth both in time and in eternity; for they have already broken through and overcome all servile fear, and mercenary rewards, being taken up and translated into 392
the noble liberty of the Spirit. And therefore they have despised all things beneath God as dung, that they may gain Christ, and may be fit to receive Him for their reward. Already they are utterly dead to the world and to nature, that is to say, the flesh; and therefore Christ liveth in them, and worketh with them all their works. It is He Who diggeth, planteth, watereth, plucketh up, and giveth the increase; while they, like good and obedient instruments, and a pliable soil, suffer their God to accomplish His own work within them and with them. These are like a watered garden, and a fat field, which the Lord hath blessed; and they produce wine exceeding sweet, which maketh joyful the Heart of Jesus Christ. For they are cut off from their own natural and fruitless root, and are grafted into that noble Vine which springeth forth from the Father's Heart, and they draw their nourishment from that Heart. Lastly, these men so inebriate Christ, as easily to obtain from Him whatever they will, so that He Himself confesseth: "I am become like drunken men, and as one who is moist with wine."

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THE FORTY-NINTH CHAPTER.

"It is finished."

When Christ had tasted the draught of gall, He spake the sixth word: "It is finished;" signifying thereby that by His Passion had been fulfilled all the prophecies, figures, mysteries, scriptures, sacrifices, and promises which had been foretold and written concerning Him. This is that true Son of God, for Whom the Father of heaven hath made ready a supper in the kingdom of His eternal blessedness; and He sent His servant, that is, the human and servile nature of Christ, to call them that had been invited to the wedding. For Christ, according to the human nature which He had taken on Him, was not only a servant, but a servant of servants, and served all of us for three and thirty years and more in great labour and suffering. This He Himself telleth us through Isaias the prophet: "Thou hast made Me to serve in thy sins." And, indeed, His whole life long He spent in this; namely, in inviting all men to His supper. For this He preached, He worked miracles, He went from place to place, He cried out, and proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and that every man should make ready for it. But they would not come. And when the Father of the 394
household heard this, He said unto His servant: "Compel them to come in, that My house may be filled." Then that servant thought thus with himself: How shall I be able, by subtlety and without violence, to compel these men to come, that both rebellion may be avoided, and yet the right and faculty of free will may remain to them untouched? For if I compel them to come by chains of iron, and hard blows, and scourges, I shall have asses, not men. He said then within Himself: "I perceive the condition of man, how he is given to love. Therefore I will show him such love as shall pass all his understanding, nay, than which none can be greater. Now if man will observe this, he will feel himself so caught fast in its meshes, that he will not be able to escape its heat and fire, and will be compelled to turn to God, and love God in return. For whithersoever he shall turn, he will ever be met by the immense benefits, the infinite goodness, the marvellous love of God; and, at the same time, the compulsion will grow strong with him to return love for this love, and it will so urge and impel him, that he will not be able to resist it, and he will feel himself gently compelled to follow." Now when this was done, this faithful and prudent Servant, Jesus Christ, said to His Lord and Father: "It is finished;" I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. 395
What more could I have done, and I have not done it? I have not even one member left which is not wearied and troubled by labour and suffering. My veins are dried up, all My Blood is shed; My marrow is spent, My throat is hoarse with crying. I have shown such love to man, that his heart cannot be human, no, not even of stone, nor that of a brute beast, but must be altogether devilish and desperate, if he be not moved at the thought of this.

Moreover, this word of our Lord Jesus is a word of sorrow, not of joy. For our Lord spake it not as if He had now escaped from all punishment. But "It is finished," He said—all,

that is to say, which had been fore-ordained and decreed by the Eternal Truth, that He should suffer. Besides, all the sufferings which had been inflicted upon Him by degrees, and one by one, He now suffereth altogether at once with immense pain. Hitherto He had been tortured gradually, now in this member, now in that, but now He undergoeth intolerable pain in all His members at once. Oh! how those stretched-out arms were racked, although for so long a time they had been enduring pain! How the cruel wounds of His hands and feet cut into the very marrow of His Heart, when the whole weight of His Body hung upon
them Who, I ask, will have such a heart of adamant, as not to be moved by agony such as 396
this? Oh! how short were the words which our Lord Jesus uttered on the Cross, yet how weighty with sacramental mysteries! Now, of a truth, was fulfilled what we read in the book of Exodus: “And all things were finished which belonged to the sacrifice of the Lord.”

Moreover, by this word, our Lord declared the glorious victory of His Passion, how the old enemy, the envious serpent, was now conquered and beaten down, for it was for this that He had suffered. For this He had clothed Himself with the garment of man’s nature, in order to overcome and confound the enemy by the same arms by which that enemy boasted he had overcome man. This, I say, was the chief intention and scope of His Passion, and now He confesseth that it is finished. Oh! how marvellous are the mysteries and the victories comprised in this little but subtle word: “It is finished”! All that the Eternal Wisdom had decreed, all that strict justice had required for all and each, all that love had asked for, all that had been promised to the fathers, all the mysteries, figures, ceremonies foretold in scripture, all that was fitting and necessary for our redemption, all that was required to wipe
out our debts, all that contributed to supply for and repair our negligences, all that was 397
glorious and loving for the showing forth of this noble love, all that we could desire for our spiritual instruction and information; in a word, all that was good and fitting for the celebration of the glorious triumph of our marvellous redemption, all this was included in that one word: “It is finished.” What, then, remaineth for Him, save to finish and perfect His life itself in this glorious contest; and because nothing more is left Him to do, to offer His precious soul into His Father’s hands, when He had fought the good fight, and perfectly run the course of His life in all holiness? It is just, then, that He should obtain the crown of glory, which His heavenly Father shall give Him on that the day of His exaltation.

Lastly, by this word Christ offered all His labour, affliction, and sorrow for all the elect, as the Apostle saith: “Wlo in the days of His Flesh offered up prayer and supplications with a strong cry and tears to Him, Who was able to save Him from death, and was heard for His reverence, for if the blood of bulls and of goats and the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer upon the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the Blood of Christ, Who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse
our conscience from dead works to serve the living God, that is, in newness and purity of 398
spirit?”

THE FIFTIETH CHAPTER.

“*Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit.*”

Again did our Lord Jesus cry with a loud voice, saying: “Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.” O all ye who love our Lord Jesus Christ, come, I pray you, and let us watch with all devotion and compassion His passing away. Let us see what must have been His sorrow, and anguish, and torment, and oppression, when His most noble Soul was now at last compelled to pass away out of His worthy and most sacred Body, in which for thirty and three years it rested so sweetly, and peacefully, and joyfully, and holily, even as two lovers on one bed. How hard it was for them to be torn away one from the other, between whom no discord had ever arisen, no strife, no quarrel, no treachery. Oh! how grievous and unutterable was that Cross, when His holy Body was forced to lay aside so faithful a friend, so gentle a householder, so loving a teacher and master; and how great was the sorrow with 399
which, in like manner, His noble and pure Soul was torn away from so faithful a servant, whose service had ever been obediently rendered, who had never spared any trouble, and shrunk from neither cold, nor heat, nor hunger, nor thirst; and who had ever suffered both labour and sorrow in gentleness and patience. Oh! how great, how immense was this cross and affliction! For, as the philosopher saith: “Of all terrible things death is the most terrible, by reason of the natural and mutual affection, which is exceeding great, between soul and body. How much greater, then, must have been the agony and the sorrow, when Christ’s most holy Soul and Body were torn asunder, between which there had ever been such marvellous concord, such wonderful love? With inward compassion, then, and anxious sorrow, let us meditate upon this pitiable separation; for Christ’s Death is our life.

Let us contemplate with all devotion, how that sacred Body of His, the instrument of our salvation, was plunged in agony, when all His veins were now dried up, and had nothing more wherewith to nourish themselves, and when all His nerves were contracted, and all His members, as if to bid a last farewell, were bowing themselves down to die with unutterable 400
pressure. Ah! who can look without compunction, and sorrow, and compassion, upon Christ’s most gracious face, and see how it is changed into the paleness and image of death; how His eyes grow dim, yet still shed tears; how His sacred Head is bowed; how all His members show forth to us, by signs and movements, the love which they could no longer show by deeds. Let us compassionate Him, I pray, for He is our flesh and blood, and it is our sins, not His, for which He is thus shamefully put to death. O all ye who hitherto have passed by the Cross of Jesus with lukewarm or cold hearts, and whom all these horrible torments and pitiable tears, and His warm Blood poured forth like water, leave been unable to soften; let, at least, this sharp and loud voice, and this terrible cry of His, rend and pierce your hearts through and through. The voice which hath shaken the heavens and the earth and hell with fear, which hath rent the rocks, which hath opened the ancient tombs, and

raised the dead, let this voice soften your hearts of stone, and uncover the old sepulchres of your conscience, full of dead men’s bones, that is, of vicious actions, and call again your departed spirits into life. For this is that voice which of old cried out: “Adam, where art
thou? What hast thou done?” This is that voice which brought forth Lazarus from hell, 401
saying: “Lazarus, come forth; arise from the tomb of sin, and suffer thyself to be loosened from thy grave-clothes.” Of a truth, it was not so much the cruelty of His pains, as the greatness of our sins, that made our Lord break forth into this cry. He cried also, to show that with Him was the empire over death and life, over the living and the dead. For, although He was all exhausted, and devoid of strength, and beyond the power of man had endured so long the bitter pains of death, yet He restrained death from putting forth its power against Him, until it pleased Him.

He cried with a loud voice, in order to make earthly men, who seek nothing but the earth, shake with fear and trembling, and cause them to meditate and see how naked and helpless the Lord of lords passed away out of this life. He cried with a terrible voice, in order to stir up all those who live in luxury, and who have grown old in their filth, and who, like dead dogs, send forth a foul stink, and, like the beasts of the field, have grown rotten in their own dung, so that, at some time or other, these wretched ones may rise from their lusts, and desires, and voluptuousness, and the delights of the senses, and see how the Son of God, Who never contracted even the least stain of filth, went forth to His Father; and with what
labour, and pain, and agony, He departed from the light of day, and what anguish and un- 402
utterable affliction He had to undergo before He reached His Father’s kingdom. And yet these men, by obeying the pleasures of their flesh, and loosening the rein to the affections and desires of nature, think that they will be amongst the blessed, and will mount up to heaven. Our Lord also cried with a loud voice, that He might inflame the slothful and lukewarm to devotion and love.

Moreover, He cried with a loud voice, as a sign of this glorious victory which He had obtained, when, having entered into single combat with His cruel and strong adversary, and having come down into the arena and battle-field of this world, He had put him to flight upon Mount Calvary, and stripped him of all his spoils, and left him naked. This victory, I say, and glorious triumph, Christ proclaimed with a loud voice, as a sign of triumph, and thus departing from the place of combat victorious and triumphant, and gathering together the whole army of His merits, He departed to the place of all delights, even the Heart and Bosom of God His Father, commending both Himself and all His own thereto, as to a sure refuge, and saying: “Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.”

From these words we may gather, that the Eternal Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, had 403
been let down like a fishing hook, or ample net, by the Father of heaven, into the great sea of this world, to catch not fish, but men. Moreover, God let down this net on the right hand, where He knew it would enclose a vast multitude. Hear how He saith: “My Word, that goeth

forth out of My mouth, shall not return to Me empty, but He shall do whatsoever I will, and He shall prosper amongst those to whom I have sent Him.” And this net is drawn by the Father out of the salt sea, to the quiet shore of His Fatherly Heart, full of elect men, of works of charity, of penance, patience, humility, obedience, spiritual exercises, merits, and virtues. For Christ drew into Himself all the afflictions and virtuous works of all the good: even as S. Paul saith: “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;” in like manner, Christ liveth in all the good, who are dead to this world, and who have submitted themselves as obedient instruments in Christ’s hands. In these, I say, Christ liveth, suffereth, and worketh. For whatever ever good there is in all men, is all the work of God.

Christ, then, feeling His Father draw Him, gathered together in Himself, after a certain
marvellous manner, all the elect with all their works, and commended them to His Father, 404
saying: “Father, these are Thine; these are the spoils which I have obtained as Conqueror by the sword of the Cross; these are the vessels which I have bought with My precious Blood; these are the fruits of My labours. Keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given Me. I ask not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil.”

Thus, then, did Christ commend Himself with all of His into His Father’s hands. Come, therefore, O faithful and devout soul, and watch with exceeding earnestness the going in and the going out of thy Lord Jesus; follow Him lovingly and longingly, even to the chamber and bed of delights, which He hath made ready for thee in His Father’s Heart. O happy he, who could now be dissolved with Christ, and die with the thief, and hear from our Lord’s lips that word full of comfort: “To-day thou shalt be with Me in paradise.” And although this is not given unto us, yet whatever we can here obtain by labours, and watchings, and fasts, and prayers, let us commend all this with Christ unto the Father; let us pour it back again into the fountain, from which it came forth to us; and let nothing at all remain to us of vain complacency; nothing be left to us among men, by seeking any praise, or honour,
or reward. But whatever our God hath vouchsafed to work in us, let us give it back again 405
into His hands, and say: “Of our own selves we are nothing. He made us, and not we ourselves. All good things have been made by Him, and without Him nothing was made. When, therefore, He taketh away with Him what He made Himself, we are simply nothing.” Lastly, Christ commended His Soul into His Father’s hands, to show us how the souls of holy and good men now mount up after Him to the bosom of the Eternal Father, souls who before this must all have gone down into hell; for it is He Himself Who hath opened for us the way of life, and it is His sacred Soul which, by rendering the journey safe and secure, hath been our guide into the kingdom of heaven.

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THE FIFTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

Jesus giveth up the Ghost.

After that our Lord Jesus had uttered the aforesaid word, He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. He bowed His head first to His Mother, and then to all men, as if to bid a last farewell; as if to ask His Mother's leave to pass away, and to give both to her and to all men the kiss of peace. Observe here, O faithful soul, the unutterable love of thy God, how He loved us even to the end. See how, when all power of speech hath been taken from Him, and while His life is ebbing away, and death is already in possession of all His members, nevertheless the latter, so far as they could, gave forth signs of love. See here the true Jacob blessing His children with outstretched arms, and gathering up His feet upon the bed of the Cross, as He passeth away to the Father. Behold Christ's gracious members now dead, yet still showing us the same love and good will as when alive! His arms remain extended to embrace us; His eyes cast down to look upon us; His head bowed low to kiss us; His wounds open and gaping, that we may enter in and take refuge therein; His head also, which before He had lifted up to His Father, while offering Himself to Him with tears, He now bent down to us in love, as a most welcome messenger of our reconciliation with the Father, and in 407
order to give us the kiss of peace as a sign of atonement.

He bowed His head towards the earth, and turned away from the glorious title of the Cross, to show us how little He valued all glory and honour, and that He desired to close His life in all abject and lowly poverty, and that He suffered nothing of this world to cling to Him. Thus, at the very end of His life, He taught us, that whenever we are honoured or praised by men, we ought to bow ourselves down to the earth, by making ourselves of no account, and by saying within ourselves: "Why art thou proud, O dust and ashes?"

Thus, then, Life died upon the Cross, that He might give to us from the tree of the Cross the fruit of life. Thus was this most excellent ransom paid for us, and all our debts cancelled. And with the same faithfulness with which He had carried out His Father's embassy, and finished it, He returned to His Father, commending His Spirit into His hands; as if He would say: "For Me, O loving Father, hast Thou cast away the debts of all men, and for Thy honour I have gladly taken them upon Myself. I was made an exile from My kingdom; I have been sold as a slave in foreign parts; I have become a prisoner, and despised, and wounded, and I have been put to a shameful death. I have suffered Thy anger to take vengeance on Me, 408
that, appeased by My agony and sorrow, Thou mightest take man back into Thy favour. I have satisfied the requirements of Thy love and justice, and the prayer of mercy I have fulfilled. I have exposed My whole self, and offered it—to Thee My will, to the Jews My Body, to sinners My Blood, to the executioners My garments, to My disciple My most loving Mother: and now I have nothing left, save My afflicted, and burdened, and care-worn spirit. Indeed, there is no place under heaven worthy of Me, except the heart of My tender and

sorrowing Mother; yet she, too, is overwhelmed by so much anguish and distress, that she can bear it no more; and truly My afflicted spirit is rather a trouble and a burden to her, than a comfort. Therefore I fly to Thee, for the torrent of Thy divine consolation can alone swallow up My sorrow and sadness, and now I commend My careworn spirit into Thy hands. Enough, and more than enough, O most gracious Father, hast Thou made known Thine anger against Me, and inflicted on Me grievous sweat and labour in the work of others. Thou hast required of Me the payment of a debt which I had not contracted, and Thou hast left Me alone in My grievous torments. Now, then, at last, after Thou hast chastised Thine only Son, be mindful of mercy, open to Me Thy Fatherly Heart, and receive My Spirit." 409

THE FIFTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

The veil of the Temple is rent in twain.

Then was the veil of the temple rent in twain, the earth trembled, the rocks were burst asunder, the sun was darkened. All these marvels and wonders took place, that both the heavens and the earth might reprove the unbelief of the Jews and all unbelievers, and that in like manner they might bear witness, by such clear signs, that Christ crucified was their Lord and God. For at the terrible cry of their Creator all creatures trembled and groaned, desiring themselves to die with their Maker, as if they were wearied with serving any longer rebellious and ungrateful men, and that they were ready to fight for Him Who made them, and avenge His wrongs. And as a proof of this indignation, the sun changed colour, the earth trembled, and all irrational creatures, as if seeking for vengeance, were moved by reason of their Creator. See here how great is His power, and strength, and majesty, Who but just now seemed so powerless, weak and abject—He showed forth a sign in heaven to 410
show that He was the very Lord of heaven. He showed forth a sign on earth, to proclaim and announce that the earth was the work of His hands, and that it was subject to Him, and obeyed Him. He also showed forth a sign in the temple, to prove that He was above the law, above all ceremonies, above all sacrifices, and that with Him lay the authority to abrogate the law, even as His had been the power to establish the same. Therefore it was that He rent the temple veil in twain, that the naked truth might be laid open, which hitherto had lain hidden under the veil and coverings of the latter; and, at the same time, that He might declare by this very fact, that mysteries, and figures, and prophecies had all been fulfilled and unveiled, when He Himself, the Eternal Truth, for Whose sake all things had been written, made Himself manifest on the Cross to the whole world. Moreover, by the rending of the veil, He uncovered the Holy of holies, and showed that every kind of sacrifice that had been offered with the blood of sheep had now become old, and was abolished, and had lost all holiness. For Christ, the High Priest, entered by His own Blood into the now uncovered Holies, and offered Himself without the city upon the Altar of the Cross openly for all the people, being made a general and everlasting sacrifice to His Father for all mankind, above 411
all, for those who sought after and desired Him.

Now, therefore, I pray, let us compassionate our Lord God, Who made us; otherwise the hard rocks and the elements will condemn us, for these had compassion for their Maker. With devout tears and loving sighs let us beat our breasts, and say: "Oh! what have we done, what have we done?" He was, indeed, the very Son of God, and we sinners have crucified Him. Let us measure the greatness of our iniquities by the power and dignity of Him Whom we have offended. For it is not a patriarch, or a prophet, or some common king of the Israelitish people, whom we have despised; but it is Jesus Christ the Son of God, the King of kings, Whom we have crucified afresh, Whose Blood we have shed, and Whom we have pressed

out, like the grape, under the heavy burden of our sins. With all sorrow, therefore, and devotion, and compassion, let us celebrate His funeral, Who was slain for our sins, and Whom we confess that we ourselves have slain. If it be possible, let us weep with all our members, for we are provoked to this even by the creatures that have no sense. Oh! who can understand the pain and torment of the tearing asunder of that knot, which that Holy Ghost had knit together, and in which Christ's noble Soul had been bound up with His worshipful Body in 412
love, even as the lover with the loved one. Who can marvel enough at that obscure eclipse of Christ's bright eyes, which by their look had given light to the earth, and, like two shining stars of the firmament, had enlightened the world with their rays, but which now have become darkened in the black cloud of death. Of a truth it was no marvel that darkness covered the face of the whole earth, when the Sun of Justice was taken away from the earth, and had closed His eyes.

O marvellous organ! O delightful harp! O sweet sounding trumpet, thou living voice of Christ Jesus, whose melody hath given gladness to the Father, and joy beyond measure to the angels of heaven, whose blessed sound hath taught the living, and raised the dead, and healed the sick, and refreshed the hungry, and put the demons to flight, and which still stirreth up the slothful and them who sleep, and arouseth them to action; who, I ask, hath imposed on Thee this hurtful silence, that, deprived of Thy honeyed words and sweet and pleasant sound, we should now have fallen so wretchedly into the sleep of death?

O glorious breast of Christ! O couch of God! O ark of heaven, wherein are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge, and are contained all riches of virtues and of 413
graces, and which breathest the spirit of life into the face of all creatures; who hath taken away Thy life?

O blessed hands! the instruments of the most high Creator, which by your very touch have cast out all diseases, and by which benediction hath been given to the world, who hath dared so inhumanly to fasten you to the Cross, forgetful of that great salvation, which hath been wrought through you? O Jesus Christ, meekest Lamb, why are these cruel wounds in Thy hands? He maketh answer by the Prophet: "These are the wounds wherewith I was wounded in the house of those who loved Me;" that is, of those who by right and deservedly ought to have loved Me, and who seemed to love Me.

O sacred feet of our Lord Jesus! Columns of the temple of God, founded upon the bases of justice, polished, and adorned with the capitals of charity. O feet that have never wandered from the path of truth, but by your walk have shown to all the way of the highest perfection, and have left to all for their everlasting instruction the footprints of double love; who hath made you so stiff, so immoveable? Who is it that hath not feared to wound you, before whom that blessed lover Magdalen, obtained so rich a grace, beneath whom the sea stood still, and offered a solid path for them who walked thereon! The very elements, as was fitting, 414
here paid you reverence, and cruel men have nailed you to the Cross!

O glorious Body of Christ Jesus! precious ciborium of God, wherein the temple of the most holy and adorable Trinity is marvellously constructed, made by the mystery of the Holy Ghost out of the excellent nature of the most pure and noble Virgin Mother, adorned with the beauty of all virtue, who hath so pitiably destroyed thee, and laid thee low, and cast thee down even to the ground? O filthy synagogue of the Jews! which so many times hast turned aside in shameless impudence from the loving embraces of thy lawful husband, God the Most High and Mighty, and hast been polluted by strange men and false idolators; thou hast looked even upon this fair Joseph with lustful eyes, and hast desired to embrace and touch a simple man, not believing Him to be the Son of God. But this Joseph is spotless and innocent, nor hath He ever hearkened to thy pestilential voice, nor given faith to thy false words, nor come down to thee from the Cross; but as a proof of His inviolate innocence, He hath left His torn garment in thy hands, and hath fled naked out of thy filthy bed-chamber unto the Father, choosing rather to suffer the loss of His garment, that is, of His Body, than to stain His Soul. O Jerusalem, and all ye Israelites, who by the light of faith have 415
reached unto the knowledge of God, and who yet have crucified your Lord and King by your deeds of evil, shed tears, weep and mourn. For what was once the place of peace, is now the valley of wickedness and the plain of battle and dissension; what was once the holy city, is now the hateful den of thieves; what was once the chosen people, is now cast away and accursed, as murderers before God. Behold the innocent Blood of your Brother, which you have taken upon your own heads, and which you have cruelly shed, crieth loudly from the earth to the Father of heaven against you. Sprinkle your heads with ashes, put mourning garments upon you, for in the midst of you the Saviour of the people of Israel hath been slain. Let your eyes fail and grow dim for weeping, for ye have rejected the only Son of the Most High King.

Look now, O man, on the face of Christ thy Lord, on which the angels gaze with delight unutterable; see how it is all disfigured, and pale, and filthy; and how there is no more beauty in it. Turn here and there Christ's sacred Body, and from the top of His head to the sole of His feet, thou wilt find nothing but wounds and blood: yet, at the same time, impress upon thy heart this disfigured image of thy Redeemer. Let this His pitiable face be ever before 416
thine eyes, and let it be so fixed in thy feelings and thoughts, that thou mayest utterly forget all vanities.

THE FIFTY-THIRD CHAPTER.

Jesus is pierced with the lance.

After this, by reason of the Paschal solemnity, on which it was unbecoming that the bodies should remain on the Cross, the Jews asked of Pilate, that the legs of those who had been crucified might be broken, and their bodies taken away: and when leave had been given, they first of all broke the thieves' legs. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was already dead, they brake not His legs; but one of the soldiers, Longinus by name, opened His right side with a lance, and straightway there flowed forth blood and water. O fearful cruelty of the Jews! O pitiless and unquenchable thirst, which after so much blood-shedding was still not quenched! While His Body was yet alive ye heaped upon it torments greater than any tyrant would have done, and now when it is lifeless ye spare it not. This the Jews
did out of craft and singular wickedness; for they knew that dishonour shown to the dead, 417
would be held to be the same as if done to the living; and they wished to persuade all men that our Saviour's wickedness and guilt were so great, that they could not be adequately punished in His living Body, and therefore that it was necessary cruelly to torture His dead Body. They sought also by this to obtain the favour of the chief-priests, who wished to have sure proof of His death.

Moreover, although our Lord's Body felt nothing of this, since it was dead, and without feeling; yet in another certain way our Lord was afflicted thereby; that is, in the same way in which He even now suffereth and is afflicted at the hands of many, who swear by His sacred wounds and Passion, and who, by their grievous crimes, both wrong and insult Him, more bitterly than they who crucified Him in the Body. For He receiveth thereby far more insult to His divine Majesty, wherein He is one with the Father and the Holy Ghost, than by those outward torments inflicted on Him during His Passion.

Yet who can grasp in thought how fearfully this lance pierced and wounded the devout
soul of His tender Mother Mary, whose soul and heart dwelt, indeed, in the Body of her 418
dear Son, Who was her whole love and treasure? For if we are to believe Augustine, "there is more of the soul in loving than in living." Moreover, Bernard also saith: "Of a truth, O sweet Mother, the sword of sorrow pierced thy soul rather than the cruel lance tore the Body of thy Son, for therein was thy soul rather than His. Therefore art thou the chief of martyrs, for thy measureless inward sorrow surpasseth the outward torments of the martyrs."

We have a certain kind of figure of this in Saul, who was first chosen by God, but afterwards was cast off for his sins, and who is a type of the Jewish people. The Jewish people hath desired to pierce David with a lance, but David, that is the Soul of Christ, fleeth away through the gate of death; and the lance remaineth fixed in the wall, that is, in the side of Christ's Body, which is sorely wounded thereby. So also we read of Absalom, that as he was hanging from the tree, he was pierced by three lances. And this, too, can be applied to Christ,

Who was beautiful above the sons of men. For He, too, was pierced by three lances. The first was His great suffering from His outward affliction. The second was His measureless sorrow, arising from His compassion for His tender Mother. The third was His inward cross, because of our exceeding ingratitude, and because He foresaw that His bitter Passion
and immense labours and torments would be without effect for a great part of men. O, how 419
many, alas! are to be found at the present day, who, like the Jews, persecute our Lord, and, moreover, when they have crucified Him, fearfully wound Him. This is done by those who, after that they have once crucified our Lord by deadly sins, and have witnessed signs and wonders; after that their earth hath trembled at the voice and inspiration of God, and their stony heart hath been softened, and the filthy sepulchre of their conscience hath been opened, and the foul bones of their sins have been cast out by contrition and confusion; after that the worms have been driven out by absolution and forgiveness; after that they have received the enlightenment of heavenly grace, and striking their breasts have said: "What have we done? truly this was the Son of God Whom we have crucified!" again wound Christ, and persecute Him by shameful mockery and indignities. For is not this to mock Christ, when they confess His power and majesty, and then so lightly despise the commandments of so powerful and high a Lord, and resist His will?

Moreover, the Evangelist saith of this lance, in a marked manner, not that it wounded
Christ, but that it opened His side, signifying thereby that the gate of life was opened to us. 420
For the wound in Christ's side is the gate of the Sacraments, without which we have no access to the life of bliss. Wherefore, also, the Evangelist addeth: "And straightway there flowed forth blood and water." From this it is easy to perceive, that although Christ's nature was mortal, yet in certain respects it was different from the nature of other men. For in others, when they give up their souls, the blood congealeth, but from Christ's side, not without miracle, as from a living well, there flowed forth true blood and water, thus showing Him to be the living well-spring from which the life of all of us hath flowed. Of this we read in Zachary: "In that day there shall be an open fountain for the house of David, and to those who dwell in Jerusalem, for the washing of the sinner, and the unclean woman." Now this is fulfilled by the Blood and water flowing from Christ's side. For by the Blood, which is the price of our redemption, we are washed from sins; and by the water, which is the figure of our baptism, we are cleansed from all the stains of original sin, even as our Lord saith by Ezechiel: "I will pour forth upon you clean water, and ye shall be cleansed from all your iniquities."

Christ's side was also, doubtless, opened, that we might have access and entrance into
His Heart. Hence Augustine saith: "Behold the door in the side of the ark, through which 421
enter in all the creatures that are saved from the deluge. Behold thy source, thy father, who hath regenerated thee to life! For even as our mother Eve was formed out of the side of the sleeping Adam, so out of the side of Christ dead upon the Cross the Church arose."

Lastly, Christ's side was opened, and straightway there flowed forth the Sacraments. From this is seen Christ's incomprehensible love towards us, since He hath spent His whole self upon us. Nothing hath He hidden in His Heart, which He hath not wholly given to us. What more could He have done for us than He hath done? His own Heart He hath opened to us, as His most secret chamber, wherein to introduce us as His elect bride. For His delights are to be with us; and in the peacefulness of silence, and in silent peacefulness, to take His rest amongst us. He hath given us, I say, His Heart fearfully wounded, that we may dwell therein, until utterly purified, and cleansed, and conformed to His Heart, we may be made fit and worthy to be led with Him into the divine Heart of the Eternal Father. He giveth His own Heart to be our dwelling, and asketh in return for ours, that it may be His dwelling. He giveth us, I say, His Heart, even as a bed adorned with the red roses of His own purple Blood; and He asketh in return for our heart, even as a bed decorated for Him with the white 422
lilies of clean works. Who will dare to refuse Him what He Himself, in His rich bounty, hath bestowed upon us? Behold! He inviteth us into His sweet wounds, and into His loving and open side, even as into a rich wine-cellar flowing with all delights, saying to us in the words of the Canticle: "Come, My sister, My dove, into the holes of the rock; that is, into My Sacred Wounds." Who hath a heart so iron and so stony, as not to be touched by such love and kindness, when He, Who is the King Almighty, immense, eternal, embraceth us with such mighty love, who are but dust and ashes? And yet, Oh! the shame, the sorrow! we turn our back upon Him, and despise so great a Majesty. This is why Augustine crieth out in the person of Christ: "Weigh with thyself, O man, of what kind and how great was the suffering which I underwent for thy salvation. When thou wert still My enemy, I led thee back into My Father's favour. When thou wert wandering as a lost sheep, I sought thee for long with much sweat and labour, and when I had found thee I brought thee back upon My shoulders with great suffering to My Father. I submitted My head to the crown of thorns, I laid My hands and feet open to the nails, I bent My whole Body patiently to scourges, I shed My 423
Blood even to the last little drop, I gave My Soul for thee that I might join thee unto Me by love; and yet thou withdrawest, and art separated from Me. Lastly, I opened My Heart to thee, and gave thee the rosy Blood of My Heart to drink. What more askest thou of Me? Tell Me, I pray thee, how I may soften, and turn, and draw thee to My love, and, of a truth, I will do it unto thee."

Let us then approach with longing thirst and love unto this living well, for He will give unto us the water of life, and that freely, without price and without exchange. See! how readily He inviteth us, saying: "He who is athirst, let him come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." See here the pure well springing forth in the midst of paradise, whereby the whole earth is watered. Come, then, with the loving soul of the Canticle, and in all the temptations, and miseries, and afflictions of this life, let us flee into the holes of the rock. "Of which rock?" thou askest. Of Jesus Christ our Lord. For He is the Rock, which

was struck by Moses, that is, by the Jewish people, by the rod of the Cross, and gave forth plentiful waters, so that we may draw not water only, but even, as the Scripture testifieth, oil from this rock. Hence the prophet Jeremias saith: "O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities," that is, the noise and disturbances of the people, "and dwell in the rock, and be like 424
the dove that maketh her nest in the highest mouth of the hole," that is, in Christ's open side. Christ is the stone which Jacob the patriarch set up for a title, and over which he poured oil, for a sign of abundant mercy and loving-kindness. What can be wanting to us in this rock? Of a truth we are safe here, and secure from all our enemies. Here the old serpent, the trailing snake cannot come. Here we are lifted up from earth, and placed on the path of heaven. Let the world tempt, and enemies threaten, and the flesh complain, we have, indeed, no need to fear, for we are founded on a rock. Never are we so safe as in our Saviour's Wounds. "I take," saith S. Bernard, borrowing from S. Augustine, "I take with confidence what I want, I take it from the bowels of my Lord, for they overflow with mercy;" nor are the holes wanting through which they flow: "They have dug My hands and My feet, and they have pierced My side with a lance;" and through these holes I can suck honey from the rock, and oil from the hard rock; that is, taste and see how sweet the Lord is. He thought of peace, and I knew it not. But an opening nail, the piercing nail was made for me, that I might see the will of the Lord. What do I see through the hole? The nail crieth out, the wound 425
crieth out that God is truly in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. The iron hath gone through His Soul; it hath come near His Heart, so that He knoweth no more how to feel for my infirmities. But the secret place of His Heart is open to me through the holes of His Body; the great sacrament of love is open; the bowels of God's mercy are open, wherein the Orient from on high hath visited us. Why are Thy bowels seen open through Thy Wounds? Why? Because in what could it shine forth more clearly than in Thy wounds, that Thou, Lord, art meek, and gentle, and of great mercy? Augustine also saith: "Longinus opened for me Christ's side with a lance, and I have entered in," Here I dwell with confidence; here I refresh myself with gladness; here I rest in sweetness; here I feed on delights.

But oh! what was the sorrow, what the pain with which God's worshipful Mother, the Virgin Mary, was seized, when she saw her only solace, and the whole delight of her heart, hanging dead on the Cross? Oh! how that fearful cry pierced her tender heart, when that same beloved and only-begotten Son of hers cried out with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost! How was her soul then melted away in her burning love for Christ, even as wax is melted in the fire, and, like a seal of wax, received upon itself the pitiable image of her cru- 426
cified Son! For perfect love hath three conditions, or effects, or works. Its first work is forcibly to carry the lover out of himself, for love is strong as death, and even as death violently teareth away the soul out of the body, so doth perfect love draw a man utterly out of himself, so that in himself he wholly falleth away. Another work of love is to attract, or inwardly draw. For as, in the first place, it draweth the lover out of himself, so, in the second place,

it joineth and maketh him one with the beloved, and attracts him towards the beloved, even as our Lord saith to the loving soul: “With everlasting love have I loved thee, therefore have I drawn thee and shown pity upon thee.” Now this is also done by love, so truly, that the lover liveth not where he standeth or walketh, but where he loveth. For where our treasure is, there also is our heart. And Augustine saith: “A man is such as the thing that he loveth.” They who love earthly things are worms, not men. They who love the pleasures of the flesh, are beasts devoid of reason. They who love heavenly things are angels, for their conversation is in heaven. They who embrace God with perfect love, become God, as David said: “I have said, ye are Gods, and all of you sons of the Most High.” 427 For what God is by nature, that we are made by grace and transforming love. The third work of love is transformation itself; and this is its chief and peculiar work, and rendereth the lover conformed and like unto the beloved; even as fire changeth into itself both iron, and whatever it can act upon. Hence also God, Who is uncreated love, in His immense and bountiful love, hath made man according to His own image and likeness; and again, impelled by the same love, His most high and loving Godhead hath so cast itself down and humbled itself, as to take upon it the form and likeness of man, whom It loved so much.

Thus, also, the Blessed Virgin Mary, as became such a Mother, loved her dear Son, from her very inmost heart, and surpassed all in love. Wherefore, utterly drawn out of herself by the force and efficacy of love, she was both rapt into Christ her Beloved, and so transformed by Him, that she became wholly like to Him. For, like soft wax, she was so impressed with the lifeless and crucified image of her Son, and made like thereto, being likewise crucified with her only begotten Son, wounded, slain, and fearfully tormented in every part together with Him, that she lived no more in herself, but in Christ her Beloved, and He in her. For if the strength of Christ’s love so absorbed S. Paul that he could say: “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;” 428 and again: “I am fastened with Christ to the Cross, and I bear about the wounds of the Lord Jesus in my body;” how much more must we believe that this happened to the Blessed Virgin, whose love surpassed the love of all men, even as the vast sea some little brook. Who, then, can understand those bitter pains and torments, which that most sorrowing Mother felt, when the lance pierced Christ’s adorable side with a dreadful wound. Of a truth, this was the sword of grief, of which just Simeon had prophesied long before. O blessed they, who are made partakers of this wound; whose hearts are so pierced by the blessed lance of Christ’s love, that henceforth they glow with the everlasting fire of love!

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THE FIFTY-FOURTH CHAPTER.

Jesus is taken down from the Cross.

Let us now see how sad a funeral, and what mournful funeral rites the spotless Virgin, and the other friends of our Saviour, celebrated over the dead body of Christ. Oh! with what desire and devotion did the tender Virgin embrace the Cross of Christ her Son, and reverently receive the blood and water which flowed from His side. Oh! how often did she stretch out her arms towards Him, and desire also to clasp and embrace Him with her outward arms, Him Whom she had already impressed and engraven on her heart! Oh! with what devotion, and how lovingly did she fold Christ's now lifeless body, when it had been taken down from the Cross, in her maternal arms, and press it to her heart! But, at the same time, how were all her bowels moved with fresh compassion! How was her soul, like wax in the fire, melted in love, and her whole self dissolved in tears! O how she fell upon that disfigured face of His, as it lay there in its shame, and kissed it again and again, and not only washed it, but plentifully watered it with her warm tears! And Christ's faithful lover, too, Magdalene, how devoutly she fell at His feet—at which she had formerly obtained such grace—and washed them again in her tears, and kissed His sacred wounds, showing to His
dead body the same kindness and love as when He was yet alive. How great was the compas- 430
sion of all Christ's friends there present, and how burning was their love, so that they who stood by felt its heat, even as men are warmed by the fire near which they stand. Oh! how sad were the tears that flowed in streams from their eyes over Christ's Body! What groans and sighs they sent up to heaven! how sad a funeral they justly gave our Lord! No song was heard there, nothing but groans, and tears, and lamentations. Oh! how did the worshipful Mother count each limb and wound, and look into it, and kiss it, weeping over each, and washing it with her tears; nay, engraving each upon her own heart, and weighing with herself and measuring the pains of each limb, and heaving sighs such as pass our understanding; and, at the same time, according to her heart's desire, making an ointment of the blood and marrow of her heart in her burning love, and anointing all His wounds and sores. Oh! how did the burning tears flow down that tender Mother's sweet face, like gentle streams running one before the other, as if striving which should first reach Christ's Body! Nay, saith blessed Augustine: "which of the angels could then have kept from tears, when he saw his King and Lord wasted away by so foul and shameful a death, and beheld, contrary to all nature, how
the Maker of nature, the God Who cannot die, in a human nature sought after death? How 431
did the bright Cherubim and burning Seraphim marvel at this unutterable love, when they beheld that Life itself had died for love, that the dead might return to life; for these blessed and heavenly spirits saw before them Christ's Body so inhumanly torn, mangled and lifeless, as well as His tender Mother, as she stood there so anxiously embracing Him, all stained with His Blood, and shedding such streams of pitiful tears that she could not restrain them.

And what shall we say of S. John? Now, as we may imagine, he conformed himself to the sorrowing Mother in his own tears and sorrow, and became her most faithful companion. How gently and tenderly he exhorted her, now for a little while, at least, to lay aside her excessive grief, and leave off weeping. Oh! how he, too, threw himself in his bitter anguish and distress of spirit on Christ's sacred breast, on which he had lately so sweetly rested, pouring back the water of loving tears into that well, from which he had drank the water of saving wisdom.

Then Joseph, and John, and the other friends of Jesus, earnestly besought the Blessed Virgin to suffer our Lord's Body to be arranged and made ready for burial, for the sun was 432
nigh its setting. Then, too, did that tender Mother answer with words of lamentation: "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least ye, my friends; tear me not away so quickly from my beloved Son; take not away from me so hastily Him Whom I bore in my womb; suffer me, at least, to enjoy Him dead, Whom I have not been able to keep alive. Let me, I pray you, show to His lifeless Body that love and tenderness which was not shown to His living Body during His Passion. Let me now water with my tears Him to Whom I was not allowed to give one drop of water, even during His cruel thirst. Let me for a while satisfy my soul with tears and sighs, since I am no longer able to find refreshment in His sweet presence. Do not, do not, I beseech you, tear the Mother from her Son; take not so quickly from me Him Whom I have loved so long, or, at least, bury me along with my most loving Son."

Thus were they sore distressed, for the sun now going down towards its setting, urged them on to the burial of His Body; yet, as was meet, they were moved to compassion for the exceeding bitter sorrows of His Mother, nor did they wish to overwhelm her already too afflicted heart. Wherefore, for a little while, they allowed her love to work, that she might satisfy for a while, at least, her burning thirst. But afterwards S. John soothed her with sweet and prudent words, and prayed her to allow them to bury her Son, and she, not however 433
without grief, consented. But oh! how devoutly, how sorrowfully did she follow that sad funeral of her Son, holding His sacred head, her eyes fixed upon His face, while she kissed it times without number, and watered it with her tears! Whence, I ask, did that sad Mother have all those tears which she shed to-day? How could her tender heart bear this intolerable anguish and distress? Of a truth, it was all her burning love, which was stronger than death itself. Oh! with what grief and mourning she bade farewell to so dear and precious a treasure! How lovingly she embraced His tomb, as if she would say, not indeed with her lips,—for how could she, plunged as she was in such anguish of soul?—but in her heart: O sacred monument! O happy tomb! O precious rock! O pearl beyond all price! O admirable ciborium! how noble a treasure, how excellent a prize, how immense a Lord dost thou contain? O elect vessel! O happy creature, that art found worthy to receive thy Creator, and to give hospitality

to the King of glory, lay aside now thy natural hardness and roughness, and become soft, so as reverently to embrace the tender limbs of my beloved Son. O glorious ark! O excellent temple of God, above all creatures the most like unto myself! For even as I myself was chosen by God to bear His Son in my chaste womb, so hath He chosen thee to receive Christ's 434 worshipful Body, the glorious instrument of the most blessed Trinity, by which God worked so many marvels, the priceless treasure of the world, and its chief good, surpassing the heavens and the earth in its excellence and worth. And even as thou art new, nor hast ever been polluted by the contact of any body, so I, too, am pure and free from the touch of all creatures. Even as from thee, although closed, the Saviour of the world shall rise again alive, so from my closed womb the salvation of the world went forth. And even as thou art a rock solid and immoveable, so have I remained unchangeable, and unconquered in faith and all virtue.

Moreover, this sepulchre of our Lord hath a certain resemblance in form to the spiritual monument which the Blessed Virgin had made ready for her loving Son in her own heart. For as the sepulchre was cut out and polished with sharp iron, so the glorious Virgin suffered a fitting place to be cut in the inmost parts of her soul by the sword of sorrow, as a monument exceeding suitable for the afflicted and tortured Body of her Son; for God loveth a humble and broken heart. And as in this sepulchre no man had as yet been laid, so no strange love or affection had ever stained, even in the least, the Virgin Mother's tender heart. For she is 435 that closed door, which to no man hath been ever opened, through which alone the Prince and the King of Israel hath gone forth. Moreover, the monument was in a garden; and so, too, the spotless Virgin was the enclosed garden of her Beloved, surrounded by the hedge of prudence and discretion, since she was full of such light and discretion, that never could aught of evil, even under the cloak of virtue, steal into her garden. Nor was there on any side of her garden even the least opening through which the hateful and impure serpent could only once cast his eyes, who had dared not only to enter into the glory of paradise, but even to defile it. And this garden was fruitful, and planted with the herbs of all kinds of virtues, so that there was no place for any kind of weeds to spring up. For the singular glory of this pure Virgin, the flower of the field, and the lily of the valley, grew therein, even the excellent and aromatic flower of Jesse, on which the Holy Spirit hath rested, and the pleasant rose of Jericho. And, for a clear sign of her divine and singular benediction, there sprang up therefrom that blessed Vine, whose branches stretch up on high, and whose smell driveth all poison and all serpents far away; whose wine, rejoiceth and warmeth the heart, and, according to the Prophet, buddeth forth virgins. Our Lord's holy Mother had also a pure 436 winding-sleet, that is, the garment of simple obedience, innocence and integral virginity. Nor were there wanting to her the aloe of Litter sorrow, and the myrrh of intolerable affliction. She had also a precious balsam, the ointments, and spices of all virtues.

Thus, then, did she anoint and wrap Christ her Son, and bury Him in the sacred monument of her own heart. But now let us consider how sorrowfully the afflicted Mother departed from the monument. How continual was her thought of Him Whom she had lost, and how priceless a treasure she had suffered to be hidden under the stone. Oh! how pitiably vas she led away, all exhausted and worn, from the sepulchre, by S. John and her other friends. Of a truth, whosoever hath no compassion for one so afflicted, so sorrowing, so grievously troubled, who is, at the same time, the Virgin Mother, nay, our Lady, is no living child of grace, but an abortion, senseless, and dead, and unworthy, it is clear, to draw the milk of grace from his mother’s breasts. But we, as hath been said, will, together with the Virgin Mother, bury Christ Jesus in our hearts, so that He may also rise again in us, and that we, by Him and in Him, may rise from all dead works, and with Him may mount up in all happiness to the glory of His Father, He Himself being our help, Who is blessed for 437
ever. Amen.

THE FIFTY-FIFTH CHAPTER.

A devout Prayer for conformity to the sacred life and crucified image of Jesus Christ.

O Unity above all understanding! O adorable Trinity of God I beseech Thee, by the Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He took upon Him, and which was crucified, bow down the abyss of Thy Godhead to the abyss of my lowliness, and driving away all my wickedness, create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.

O good Jesus, by that immense love who drew Thee from Thy Father's heart and bosom into the womb of the Virgin unstained; by Thy taking on Thee our human nature, in which Thou becamest my servant, and deliveredst me from everlasting death, draw me out of myself to Thee my God; and may this Thy love, O my God, recover for me Thy grace, and perfect and increase in me whatever is imperfect in me; may it raise up what is fallen down, 438 restore what hath been destroyed, conform me to Thy most holy life and loving conversation; and may it make me one with Thee, and enclose me within Thee, and engrave on the fleshly tables of my heart, and in all my behaviour, Thy holy life with all its virtues, as well as the goodness of Thy behaviour. Loosen my spirit, O my God, from all lower things, rule my soul, and, at the same time, work together with my body holy and just works.

By Thy holy Nativity purify me for a new life. By Thy holy conversation perfect me in all virtues. By Thy sacred doctrine, enlighten the eyes of my mind, and teach me the short and complete path of truth. By Thy lowly washing of the feet of Thy disciples, and even of him who betrayed Thee, cleanse and purify the feet of my corrupt affections, and whatever in me hath a leaning unto vice, and preserve them from being ever again defiled by filth. By the making ready of the Cenacle, by the institution of the most excellent Sacrament, wherein out of love unutterable Thou hast given Thyself for our food and drink, form within me by Thine own power, and fit up for Thyself a fitting place, and make in me Thy cenacle, adorning it with all kinds of spices and flowers of virtues, that it may be worthy to draw Thee within itself, and this by Thy own merits, and gratuitous and condign preparation. Vouchsafe, also, 439 to be Thyself both the house and the Master of the house, the Priest and the Sacrifice, the Giver and the Receiver, and change me wholly and consume me in Thy burning love, and transform me thereby, and make me one with Thee, that I may die to myself, and live to Thee alone; and be Thou Thyself Thy own praise before Thy most holy Father in heaven and on earth; and grant, O Jesus, my sweetness and my life, that I may never be found ungrateful to this Thy love. By Thy immense lowliness, whereby Thou sufferedst Thyself to be sold by Thy own disciple, grant me, O my God, that I may never sell Thee, my God, for any passing thing or mere empty breath of empty glory, and that I may try to bear all contempt of myself for the honour of Thy blessed Name with loving meekness, and that I may sell myself to Thee for the kingdom of heaven, which is ever to be bought, and give my whole

self up to Thee by a certain divine commerce, since it is Thou Who sayest: "Son, give Me thy heart. I am wounded for the love of thee. Give Me thy heart, and I shall be healed; give Me thy heart, and take Me as thy reward."

By Thy intense sadness, distress and fear; by Thy devout prayer and humble resignation; 440
by Thy bloody sweat, grant that I may have ever recourse to Thee in all adversity and temptation, that I may trust in Thee alone, forsake myself, and offer myself in resignation to Thee.

By that admirable love of Thine, whereby Thou sufferedst Thyself not only to be betrayed by Judas, but to be given up to Thine enemies; grant me, O good Jesus, that I may never betray Thee either in myself or in my neighbours, nor refuse to mine enemies the offices and courtesies. of love.

By that love, whereby Thou desiredst to be taken and bound by wicked sinful men, absolve me from the bonds of my sins, and again bind me with the cords of Thy commandments and Thy counsels, in union with Thy gracious will, so that all the members of my body, and all the powers of my soul, may constantly persevere in the presence of Thy divine Majesty, and never, at any time, be let loose through any fault of mine, to follow after the lustful liberty of the flesh.

By Thy burning love, whereby for my sake Thou wouldst bear much reproach and confusion, and suffer Thyself to be inhumanly and cruelly treated, have mercy on my sinful and guilty soul, and unburden it from all its heavy load of sin, whereby, alas! I have so
shamefully disfigured Thy divine image, and wronged and contemned Thy holy Name in 441
myself. Grant, I beseech Thee, O most loving Jesus, that I may gladly and willingly bear, for the honour of Thy sacred Name, all the shame and confusion that may come upon me.

By that priceless love, whereby Thou didst not shrink from painful scourgings, forgive me, O most merciful Jesus, for having, alas! times without number, scourged Thee by my own evil actions, and grant that I may ever confess Thee both in my heart and by my mouth, and that all my works may, by a pure intention, be in harmony with Thy gracious will, and be done in accordance with the same; and may the image of Thy countenance persevere unhurt within me.

By the loathsome and hateful spittle, with which for my sake Thou sufferedst Thy adorable and sweet Face to be defiled by the wicked Jews, forgive me, O kind Jesus, for having stained with numberless evil thoughts and impure desires, my own face in my own conscience, wherein Thou dwellest, and which ought clearly to reflect Thy shining countenance and image, and for having received Thy most sacred Body in the filthy spittle of a conscience stained with sin, and without reverence; and grant unto me, at the same time, that I may never defile the fair face of Thine image within me by unclean actions and thoughts.

By that love, whereby for my salvation Thou didst suffer Thy glorious Face, on which 442
the angels desire to look, to be veiled with a filthy linen cloth, that the image of Thy divine

countenance, which in my inward soul was hidden and darkened, might again be uncovered within me, and that the purity of Thy bright light may again arise within me, and shine once more; by that love, I say, enlighten me inwardly with the pleasant light of Thy heavenly grace, and grant that Thy Face may henceforth be never clouded over within me; but rather take away from my heart every veil of ignorance and sin.

O most patient Jesus, Who for my salvation wast led from judge to judge, bestow upon me, I beseech Thee, the light of truth; rule all my actions, instruct my reason according to Thy gracious will, teaching it in Thy light how it ought to go forward in the royal path of virtue, and to pass from virtue to virtue.

O Jesus, meekest Lamb of God, Who for my sake didst vouchsafe to be cruelly bound, and horribly scourged all over Thy fair Body, because I had abused my whole body and all my members by sin and hurtful lusts, grant me, that I may expose and subject all my members to corporal sufferings, and patiently accept the scourges of Thy fatherly correction, nor ever scourge Thee by my vices or sins. 443

O gracious Jesus, Who for the love of me didst vouchsafe to be crowned with thorns, that Thou mightest restore and mend Thine image in my soul which had been injured by sin, as that to which Thou hast united the whole of Thy blessed Trinity—for by the power of the Father Thou upholdest my memory; by the wisdom of the Son Thou art the light of my understanding, and by the love of the Holy Ghost Thou possessest and dwellest in my will, so that without Thee I can retain nothing, understand nothing, do no good thing, but all this is done by Thy most holy Trinity, which hath made its own heaven within me, and whose kingdom is my soul. For which reason also, Thou sufferedst Thyself to be mockingly adored as a King, and Thy venerable Face to be defiled by the filthy spittle of wicked men, namely, that Thou mightest cleanse and wash Thy most holy Face within me, that had become defiled by sin. Wherefore, grant that I may adore Thee, my true God, in spirit and in truth, and hail Thee my King with due worship, and that Thy kingdom may be founded and stablished in me, and may endure, so as to deserve in an eternity of bliss to receive the crown of life.

O most merciful Jesus, Who, although innocent, wert sentenced to a cruel death for the 444
race of man, inasmuch as I have not feared the judgments of Thy justice, grant that I may ever behold Thee sitting as Judge in my soul, which is Thy tribunal, where Thou mayest bring all my thoughts, and words, and works to judgment, my own conscience bearing witness against them—for, indeed, it biteth into me sharply, and accuseth me of all my vices—so that, at the last judgment, I may appear with a safe conscience, and bear with even mind the unjust judgments of men.

O Jesus, gentle Sheep, Who for my sake wert pressed down under the heavy burden of the Cross, grant that I may gladly embrace the cross of penance, and make all crosses light by Thy Humanity, in union with the love of Thy Godhead, whereby Thou wilt unburden

me of every load, and make me feel that Thy yoke is indeed sweet, and Thy burden light; and this will be more grateful and pleasing unto Thee, than if I cling to my own crosses, and persist in them according to the feeling of my impotent nature.

O most merciful Jesus, Who wert stripped of Thy own garments, because I had lost the first state of innocence, and wert commanded to sit on a hard rock, while the rough wind burned into Thy wounded Body, and Thou Thyself wert waiting for the Cross to be made ready for Thee, grant that, by a simple confession of my sins, I may put off and lay aside the old man, and be clothed in Thy sight with the garments of virtue, so that I may not be found 445
naked, and that, stripped of all passing and temporal things that might imperil my salvation, I may deserve to be founded and established in the rock, which is Christ, even in Thyself.

O sweet Lord Jesus Christ, Who sufferedst Thyself to be so inhumanly stretched upon the Cross, that all Thy bones could be numbered, grant that all my members, and all the powers of my body and soul, being ever stretched out, and raised up in worthy praise of thee, may be lovingly united to Thee, and that my nature may be so fixed in Thy love, that I may never depart from Thy commandments, but may remain fastened to Thy Cross by the nails of Thy fear.

O unconquered Jesus, Who sufferedst Thyself to be raised up on the Cross, in order to draw all souls unto Thee, draw me wholly to Thee, that, lifted up from all earthly affections and desires, I may in spirit walk ii the heavenly places, and there firmly abide in Thy heart, O Jesus, my life, my hope, and my salvation, Thou heaven of delight, Thou hope and refuge of sinners, and of all heavy laden and afflicted hearts.

O most gracious Jesus, I beseech Thee, by the bitterness of the sorrows which for my sake Thou didst suffer on the Cross, and especially when Thy noble Soul went forth from 446
Thy Body, have mercy on my soul at its passing away; take it into Thy hands, and grant that the merits of Thy most holy Humanity may profit it, so that in me Thou mayest have peace, and joy, and delight, both in time and throughout all eternity. Amen.

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